UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.6/1995/5/Add.2
29 December 1994
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: ARABIC/ENGLISH/
FRENCH

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
Thirty-ninth session
New York, 15 March-4 April 1995
Item 3 (c) of the provisional agenda*

PREPARATIONS FOR THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN: ACTION FOR EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE

Reports from regional conferences and other international conferences

Addendum

African Platform for Action adopted by the Fifth Regional Conference on Women, held at Dakar from 16 to 23 November 1994

* E/CN.6/1995/1.

94-51751 (E) 200195 230195

DECLARATION

We, the Ministers and representatives of African Governments participating at the Fifth African Regional Conference on Women held in Dakar (Senegal) from 16 to 23 November 1994, for consideration and adoption of the African Platform for Action, in preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women to be held in Beijing from 4 to 15 September 1995,

Having reviewed and appraised the regional implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the year 2000,

Appreciative of the fact that there has been an overall sensitization of African leaders, policy makers, development agencies and women regarding the need to incorporate a gender perspective in all activities of the development process,

Conscious that in spite of the progress made, obstacles still remain in the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies,

Reaffirming our commitment to the realization of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the promotion and advancement of women through accelerated action for equality, development and peace,

Realizing that equality is not only the absence of discrimination but also the equal enjoyment of rights, responsibilities and opportunities by women and men,

Recognizing that there can be no equality and development without peace and that peace can only be achieved with the full involvement of women as equal partners with men at all levels of decision-making, diplomacy and mechanisms for peace and conflict resolution and reconciliation,

Aware that since the adoption of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, some African countries have undergone a series of crises which combined with several other internal and external factors to impede the effective implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, especially political instability related in particular to religious extremism, lack of resolute political will and commitment, lack of resources, poor economic performance due to unfavourable terms of trade and ineffective policies, effects of structural adjustment programmes and heavy debt burden, frequent natural disasters such as droughts and famines and the absence of women in decision-making levels, impeded effective implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies,

Recalling the "Abuja Declaration on Participatory Development: The Role of Women in Africa in the 1990s" which assessed the current situation of women in Africa within the context of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies and which noted that the condition of African women has in most cases deteriorated particularly in the field of higher and technical education, health, employment, decision-making and economic empowerment,

Recognizing the crucial roles that women play in the critical areas that enhance their advancement particularly in culture, the family and in the socialization process; ensuring their reproductive rights and improving their health status; in the protection and management of the environment and natural resources; in the quest for peace and in conflict prevention, resolution and management; in their political empowerment and in the realization of their legal and human rights particularly women with special needs,

Determined to implement recommendations for the accelerated advancement of women and the girl-child emanating from recent world conferences, inter alia, the World Conference on Children, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the World Conference on Human Rights and the International Conference on Population and Development,

Aware of the recent major political changes in Africa, particularly the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa as well as other processes of democratization taking place in the continent,

Aware also of the fact that African women have become more active participants in the development process in various capacities,

Determined to support women fully so that they can contribute to and participate more effectively in all the political and economic changes now taking place in Africa,

1. Declare our commitment to forge a new ethic for sustainable development based on the equal and active participation of women, men and youth as agents of change at family, community, national and international levels;

2. Commit ourselves to integrating women's concerns in:

(a) Balancing political, economic, cultural and social policy options;

(b) Harmonizing and reconciling economic growth with social equity;

(c) Emphasizing the interdependence and partnership of women, men and youth of Africa, in an atmosphere of peace and well-being;

3. Recognize that women have great potential which if mobilized and harnessed will make it possible to overcome the obstacles which have impeded the full and effective implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies since 1985;

4. Uphold the fact that the African Platform for Action is the outcome of a regional country-based review of the progress of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, and broad consultations at national, subregional and regional levels, with inputs from grass-roots communities;

5. Recognize that the African Platform for Action provides the African Common Position on the advancement of women, as well as a framework for committed and concerted action at regional, subregional and national levels for

the accelerated achievement of the objectives of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies during the rest of the 1990s and into the twenty-first century;

6. Adopt the African Platform for Action as a renewed commitment by African Governments and as a blueprint to further accelerate the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies in line with the Abuja Declaration on Participatory Development; The Role of Women in Africa in the 1990s, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and declarations at international and regional levels;

7. Calls upon the United Nations institutions and international development partners and NGOs to commit themselves to the successful implementation of the African Platform for Action.

I. STATEMENT OF MISSION

1. The African Platform for Action is a synthesis of regional perspectives and priorities and a framework for action for the formulation of policies and implementation of concrete and sustainable programmes for the advancement of women. It is developed in consonance with the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, the Abuja Declaration and the Kampala Action Plan. The Platform for Action aims to accelerate the social, economic and political empowerment of all women at all levels and at all stages of their lives under the guidance of the following principles:

(a) The operating principle of the African Platform for Action is the integration of the gender perspective in all policies, plans and actions directed towards the achievement of equality, development and peace. The underlying assumption is that international instruments that have been developed for human rights should be applicable to all sectors of society. To this end, this African Platform for Action aims to establish/strengthen sustainable mechanisms including information systems at all levels for the promotion of legal literacy and the advancement of women;

(b) Equal partnership between women and men is the ultimate goal of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and all other relevant regional and international policy instruments on human and women's rights;

(c) To this end, it is important to ensure a fuller and more active participation of women in policy formulation and decision-making processes of government;

(d) There is need to achieve/accelerate the economic, social and political empowerment of women at all levels, enabling them as citizens, on an equal footing with men, to participate at the level of decision-making, becoming active contributors to and beneficiaries of all aspects of national development;

(e) The imperative of a successful search for peace which is crucial for the African region cannot be overemphasized. Women and children are the major victims of ethnic and civil strife including religious extremism and in the

ongoing process of conflict prevention, management and resolution, women should be closely and actively involved and consulted at the national, subregional and regional levels;

(f) Priority action should be taken for protecting the human rights of girls and ensuring that they get nurture, care, education and opportunities for achieving their full potentials equally with their brothers.

II. GLOBAL AND REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES

A. Global perspective

2. In accordance with the proclamation of the United Nations General Assembly, 1975 was designated as International Women's Year (IWY), when the first intergovernmental Conference on Women was convened in Mexico City with the themes of Equality, Development and Peace. The Declaration of Mexico on the Equality of Women and their Contribution to Development and Peace and the World Plan of Action for the implementation of the objectives of International Women's Year were the major outcomes of the Conference. Since the 1970s, all United Nations agencies have been mandated by their governing bodies to incorporate a gender perspective and gender responsible policies and plans as a priority area in their programmes. The United Nations declared 1976-1985 as a Decade for Women to be devoted to effective and sustained national, regional and international action to implement the World Plan of Action and related resolutions. In 1979, the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In July 1980, the second World Conference on Women was convened in Copenhagen to assess the progress made since the first World Conference and to outline actions to be taken during the second half of the Decade for Women. Three sub-themes were added to the theme of equality, development and peace, namely education, employment and health. To mark the end of the Women's Decade, the United Nations convened the third World Conference on Women in Nairobi in July 1985. The Nairobi Conference adopted the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women up to the year 2000.

3. Since the adoption of Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women in 1985, major political, economic, social and cultural changes have taken place. These have had both positive and negative effects on women and it is against the backdrop of the impact of these global changes on the African region that this Platform for Action has been formulated.

4. The gender perspective and its incorporation in all policy decisions is of paramount importance in engendering equality, development and peace. Overall, many Governments have globally adopted strategies for the enhancement of women's status and skills, their mainstreaming and their involvement in key decision-making. However, what is still lacking in most countries, is the total political commitment and the necessary resource allocation without which the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies will remain unfulfilled aspirations.

5. The expectations for greater global security and a just, equitable and non-discriminatory international economic order have not been realized. In

addition, international financial institutions and new world trade arrangements and agreements have assumed larger roles in global affairs and have failed to halt the economic decline in many African countries. There has been a reduction in external assistance flow and the depressed demand for African primary commodities have significantly reduced export earnings. In addition, the heavy debt burden has exacerbated the already depressed economic situation. Regrettably, the interdependent world economy continues to be marked by uncertainty, imbalance, recessions and eventually this has led to the continuing marginalization of developing countries. Numerous interrelated global factors therefore impinge on the lives of women in Africa, affecting both their productive and reproductive roles. The emergence of the political democratization process has ushered in competitive multi-party system whose positive impact on women is yet to be felt.

B. Regional perspective

6. The first Regional Conference on the Integration of Women in Development was held in Nouakchott, Mauritania in 1977 to review progress made by African member States, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations operating in Africa in the implementation of the Regional Plan of Action adopted at the World Conference on Women in Mexico City in 1975. The second Regional Conference for the Integration of Women in Development was held in Lusaka, Zambia in 1979 to review the progress made for the Integration of Women in Development and to prepare for the second World Conference on Women in Copenhagen, Denmark, in July 1980. The third Regional Conference on Women was held in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania in 1984 to review and appraise progress achieved and obstacles encountered in attaining the goals for women; to adopt forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women in Africa to the year 2000; and to arrive at a common African position for the forthcoming Nairobi World Conference on Women.

7. The fourth Regional Conference on Women was held in Abuja, Nigeria, in November 1989 to provide a forum for a thorough review and assessment of the extent of implementation of the Arusha Strategies by Governments, United Nations bodies, NGOs, etc.; consider emerging socio-economic problems that are affecting the lives of African women, and to reassess the priorities stated in the Arusha Strategies and make appropriate recommendations for the future. It adopted the Abuja Declaration on Participatory Development: The Role of Women in Africa in the 1990s whose objectives aimed at defined targets to be achieved in various sectors by the year 2000 in the areas of education, science and technology, agriculture and food production, environment, decision-making and mainstreaming, population issues, women and culture, etc.

8. Other regional milestones that have impacted upon the political, socio-economic and cultural status of women in Africa have included, inter alia:

(a) The Lagos Plan of Action and Final Act of Lagos (1980);

(b) The Kilimanjaro Programme of Action on Population and Self-Reliant Development (1984);

(c) The African Charter on Popular Participation and Transformation (1990);

(d) The Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community (1991);

(e) The Dakar/Ngor Declaration on Population, Family and Sustainable Development (1992);

(f) The Ouagadougou Declaration on the Education of Girls (1993);

(g) The Regional Conference on Women and Peace, and the Kampala Action Plan on Women and Peace (1993) which was adopted by the Council of Ministers of OAU at its sixtieth session held in Tunis in June 1994;

(h) Resolution CM/Res. 1550 (LX) on the preparation of the fourth World Conference on Women adopted by the Council of Ministers of OAU at its sixtieth session held in Tunis in June 1994;

(i) Resolution CM/Res. 1551 (LX) on population and development adopted by the Council of Ministers of OAU in July 1994.

9. In most of Africa, technological backwardness, natural disasters especially drought, disruptions from civil wars and political conflicts have contributed to the depressed economic activity and growth resulting in low per capita incomes. As a result, more countries have been pushed into the least developed country (LDC) category with extremely low income levels. Economic growth has also been constrained by external debt which at the end of 1993 stood at US$ 285.4 billion, with interest on arrears representing nearly 40 per cent. The debt structure has hardly changed over the last five years. The impact on economic growth has been mixed due to the inadequacy of external support and internal conflicts which have derailed the attainment of these objectives, resulting in their failure to reflect long-term development goals and the neglect of regional planning. This has adversely affected income levels and distribution and the capacity to deliver basic services.

10. These recurrent crises have affected the tempo and level of all economic development of Africa. Women more than men tend to bear the disproportionate burden of such crises, and they become greatly disadvantaged in participating effectively in any development ventures because of some negative practices emanating from traditional, cultural, religious and attitudinal constraints. Women, who make up more than 50 per cent of the populations affected by these crises, must contribute effectively to solving the numerous problems posed by these adverse conditions.

11. Indications of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations which were finally concluded in December 1993 and adopted and signed in April 1994 are that it will have negative effects on Africa's economic performance, depending on the region's ability to manage change and optimize technology for more efficient use of factors of production in an effort to raise its competitive status in international markets. It is also certain that agricultural subsidies will increase the food import bills of African countries. This will greatly affect the socio-economic status of women because of their total involvement

with agricultural sector activities. The emergence of trade blocs and regional markets could also make it more difficult for the African region to maintain its traditional relationships with its European partners for much-needed resources. Accordingly, it is imperative that African Governments develop and adopt strategies to address this situation.

12. Economic decline, recession and the resultant economic restructuring in the face of external debt have led Governments to focus on the more pressing and immediate problems often to the neglect of longer-term issues that have direct bearing on the advancement of women. At the same time, pre-existing conditions of inequality between men and women, inter alia, in health and nutrition, levels of literacy and training, access to education and economic opportunity, and in participation in decision-making, have sometimes been exacerbated both by the crises and by the policies adopted to cope with them. In other words, such policies have compounded further the already disadvantaged situation of the women because they do not take account of their specific roles and concerns. They will also impact most adversely, the younger generation of women who will inherit this legacy. The policies do not effectively address the impact of restructuring on women and their multiple roles.

13. There is a democratization process sweeping the whole continent and women have been active participants as candidates for election, as voters and as observers of the election process in many countries. A good number of women have entered parliament through their own efforts, affirmative action and through the support of women and men, women's groups, non-governmental associations and organizations of women. Unfortunately, the number of African countries in political crisis, extremism and turmoil is on the increase. In addition, African Governments have yet to undertake comprehensive and concrete steps to promote pragmatically the integration of women as equal partners, particularly in politics, in popular participation and in key decision-making. There is need therefore to monitor the impact of democratization on women locally and nationally and to ensure that there are provisions for women's education and sensitization at all stages of their life, for more effective political participation.

14. Despite the commemoration of the International Year of the Family (IYF) in May 1994, the integrity of the African family is being seriously undermined by persistent socio-economic crises. The massive rural-urban migration and brain drain, consisting mostly of young men and women, has severely affected the socio-psychological and financial security of many families. In many African rural and urban communities, the number of female-headed households has steadily increased to a regional average of around 35 per cent. Rural-urban migration has also increased crime and violence, drug abuse, homelessness, unfavourable environmental conditions and sexual exploitation of women, young girls and boys.

15. Women's health and reproductive rights are central to the realization of their potential. The improvement of their health and their ability to exercise control over their fertility is a major step in enabling them to make the necessary choices in the other areas. African women's inability to control their own fertility is associated with the unacceptably high levels of infant, child and maternal mortality through a variety of appropriate, affordable and

accessible services and the persistence of traditional mentalities hampering contraceptive practices.

16. African Governments are faced with new development challenges represented by the adolescent population. By the year 2000 there will be some 170 million youth - those aged 15-24 - in Africa. In some African countries, nearly two thirds of the cases of septic abortions come from the 15-19 age group. Adolescent sexuality and fertility is high risk from the health standpoint. It contributes significantly to girls' inability to attain high levels of education, and to unsafe abortion which leads to maternal mortality and morbidity. The hidden costs of adolescent sexuality and fertility are also enormous and they strain many health service delivery systems of many African Governments. This situation should be addressed urgently with appropriate policies and services.

17. The unprecedented increase in the number of refugees and displaced persons in the region is one of the major consequences of the protracted internal strife, civil wars and political instability in many countries of the region. According to UNHCR, the current refugee population in Africa is estimated at 7 million out of a world total of 20 million most of whom are women and children and there are also 25 million internally displaced persons.

18. Women form a large percentage of refugees and displaced persons in the Continent. Refugee and displaced women are particularly vulnerable and special attention should be paid to their protection needs. They also represent a useful resource whose potential should be tapped in the search of durable solution to the refugee problems. The refugee women's and girl's access to health, education and shelter should not be affected as the result of their need to flee from the areas of conflict.

19. Women's health should be viewed within a global approach dealing with all the health problems affecting them in their life cycle. Mortality problems relating to malaria, malnutrition, anaemia, tuberculosis, maternal ailments and sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS, still remain preoccupying. World wide, AIDS is a health, social, economic and political issue. Africa is in the front line of the world-wide epidemic, with its younger generation being most at risk. The full dimensions of the epidemic in the region are still uncertain but it is already a grave problem in many countries in East, Central and Southern Africa. According to WHO, the number of new HIV infections among women in most African countries outnumber men by six to five, and more than 6 million women of child-bearing age have been infected. One out of every three pregnant women attending antenatal clinics in some major African urban centres is infected. Thus young women are being most seriously debilitated by the impact of the AIDS pandemic. The economic and social consequences of AIDS affect women the most with serious repercussions on the elderly women who are left to care for orphans when they are least capable. The subordinate position of women and adolescent girls, with younger women being the least empowered, and their lack of access to information, education and communication, health facilities, training, independent income, property and legal rights make them particularly vulnerable to the AIDS infection. They lack knowledge about the disease and the measures that have to be taken to protect themselves against HIV infection in spite of the key role they play and will continue to play in their response.

Consequently, it is necessary to place emphasis on decreasing women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. The young of Africa not only face a bleak economic future, but are at present at risk from the spectre of the AIDS pandemic which continues to take a tremendous toll on those below 25 years of age. Education and information campaigns which target the sexual and reproductive health of the young must be increased and strengthened, made more accessible and culturally appropriate. However, besides HIV/AIDS, Africa continues to experience high mortality rates caused by other diseases such as malaria, sickle cell anaemia, tuberculosis, and ailments related to malnutrition.

20. During the last decade, African Governments have slowly started to show an increasing tendency to see the political and socio-economic participation of women as a key factor and catalyst in the processes and linkages that engender and encourage equality, health and development and peace for the accelerated advancement of women. In this respect, practically all Governments have established and given support to national machineries to discharge their responsibilities of coordinating and monitoring the incorporation of the gender perspective in overall national development activities. In addition, most African countries have enacted legislation against discriminatory practices with regard to education, employment as well as legislation in favour of paid maternity leave for women. Very few countries have adopted relevant legislative framework to ensure fair share of family responsibilities between men and women as stipulated in International Labour Convention No. 156 on Workers with family responsibilities.

21. Overall therefore, despite regional and individual efforts made by member States, the international community and local and international NGOs to improve the status of African women, only modest progress has been made and critical gaps still exist in several areas. The more glaring gaps are in relation to, inter alia, gender disparity in access to education, employment, health services, access to - and control of - productive resources and technology; underrepresentation in particular in the higher political, economic, social and decision-making levels; inadequacy of national machineries, policy and programmes for the enrichment of the women's cause; lack of availability and use of gender-disaggregated data; de jure and de facto discrimination with respect to employment opportunities; marital and family status; lack of awareness on the part of both women and men regarding the issue of women's legal and human rights; and lack of understanding of the legal and administrative systems and mechanisms for redress. A more detailed analysis of these gaps is given in the following section.

III. CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN

22. In the regional review of the process and progress of implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, several gaps and critical areas of concern have been identified at the national and regional levels. Others have been identified through technical workshops convened at national, subregional and regional levels, with inputs from grass-roots communities, women and women's organizations, national and international NGOs, intergovernmental bodies and United Nations agencies. The intention is to reflect a broad-based consensus on the critical areas of concern as well as the criteria used in the process of

identifying these areas. They constitute the core of the African Platform for Action, viz:

(a) Women's poverty, insufficient food security and lack of economic empowerment;

(b) Inadequate access to education, training, science and technology;

(c) Women's vital role in culture, the family and socialization;

(d) Improvement of women's health, reproductive health including family planning and population-related programmes;

(e) Women's relationship and linkages to environment and natural resource management;

(f) Involvement of women in the peace process;

(g) The political empowerment of women;

(h) Women's legal and human rights;

(i) Mainstreaming of gender-disaggregated data;

(j) Women, communication, information and arts;

(k) The girl-child.

It should be noted that these critical areas of concern are interdependent in terms of how they affect the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. Further, the order of presentation reflects the concerns of women in the African region but they are all of equal priority.

A. Women's poverty, insufficient food security and lack of economic empowerment

23. Poverty in Africa manifests itself in various forms and has its essential origin in lack of income, exclusion from the market and social and political life, unequal distribution of wealth and income from global, regional, subregional to local levels, economic recession, drought and other disasters, heavy debt burden, structural adjustment programmes that are incompatible with sustainable development, rapid population growth, armed conflicts and civil strife and these in turn are linked to the general political, economic and social conditions of a given country.

24. More than a third of the people of Africa live in abject poverty and are unable to meet their most basic needs. In 1991, this number was estimated at about 250 million. Notably, the poor are usually associated with high levels of malnutrition, illiteracy, poor sanitation and limited participation in socio-economic activities. For example, in 1993, infant mortality rate in sub-saharan Africa averaged 103 per 1,000 live births as compared to 71 per

1,000 for all developing countries. In the same year, under-5 mortality rates were estimated at 160 per 1,000 live births in sub-Saharan Africa. Between 1985 and 1990, only 51 per cent of urban population in Africa had access to sanitation facilities compared to 16 per cent for the rural population. During the same period, access to safe water covered only 68 per cent in the urban areas and 26 per cent in the rural areas. For all Africa, calories per capita per day averaged 2,100 in 1993 while protein per capita per day was 53 grams compared to a world average of 2,600 calories and 71 grams respectively. The agricultural sector can contribute up to 50 per cent of the GDP, while the agricultural population can make up to 85 per cent of the total. There is also a big gap between urban and rural areas, as regards incomes, food intakes, etc.

25. The heavy burden of poverty falls disproportionately on women especially female-headed households whose proportion is increasing and is now around 35 per cent. Feminization of poverty has therefore become a reality. Although women constitute more than half of the population, have limited access, ownership and co-ownership to land and housing, they nevertheless provide 60 to 80 per cent of the food supply.

26. In formal employment, they are concentrated in low pay, low grade sectors with poor promotion prospects. Women are the backbone of both cash crop and subsistence farming, yet their non-marketed productive and reproductive activities are neither marketable nor recognized as economic outputs. They are thus denied the tools and means of sustainability and still confront considerable discrimination that constitute a major obstacle to increased productivity.

27. To compound all this, many African countries are also experiencing critical situations in terms of food security, accessibility and distribution. Once a net exporter of food, since the 1980s the region has become a net importer and hunger and malnutrition continue to be a critical issue, affecting women and children. Since 1960, the population in Africa has increased at an annual rate of 3 per cent while food production grew by only an average of 1.8 per cent with the food self-sufficiency ratio dropping from 100 per cent in 1960 to 81 per cent in the 1990s. Approximately 25 per cent of food requirements are imported including food aid, with the annual food imports being equivalent to roughly 30 per cent of Africa's agricultural export earnings. The scarce exported agricultural products are marketed at very low prices while the limited foreign exchange earnings accruing from such commodities are diverted from more important uses to pay for food imports. Security and self-sufficiency are therefore not related to food alone, but to the general and pervasive problem of poverty, unequal distribution of income, weaker purchasing power and unfavourable terms of trade as well as the burden of external debt servicing.

28. Women in Africa, as the main providers and traditional managers of food at the family and household level, can play a key role in the equitable distribution and redistribution of scarce resources. Strengthening of women's potential for management of food and food aid resources can ensure that women's priorities, and their families' well-being, are better served. This increased food security at household level would, in turn, contribute to the global aim of national food security.

29. Women in Africa must be empowered to participate in economic structures and policy formulation and in the productive process itself. It is now recognized that the contribution of rural women in Africa is critical in development. The African Platform for Action, in line with the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies and the Abuja Declaration, emphasizes the economic empowerment of women through stimulating, consolidating and coordinating the entrepreneurial spirit and skills of African women and providing adequate access to both formal and informal sector resources. Women's empowerment will enhance their capacity to realistically alter the direction of change for their well-being as well as of society as a whole. It is also crucial to engage the younger generation of women as active partners for change. Consequently, strategies and actions are needed in order to move away from the current welfare orientation to address the economic empowerment of women, and in particular strengthen and support their participation in trade and industry; stem the growing disparity between rural and urban conditions; and move towards environmentally sustainable actions for poverty alleviation through sustainable development. The actions proposed by the Platform are based on the recognition of women's own responses to increasingly difficult and changing productive and economic circumstances based on their know-how, initiatives and capacities.

B. Insufficient access of women to education, training, science and technology

30. The right to education is a human right having major implications both for the individual as well as for social and economic development. Given the inverse relationship between female education especially at the first and second levels and varying indicators of fertility and mortality, the positive impact on health well-being and the process involved in transforming societies makes education of the populace an imperative.

31. All available indicators point to severe and persistent crisis in the education sector of most of the African countries with gross enrolment ratios being consistently on the decline while attrition rates, particularly that of girls have been on the increase and the quality of education sliding. Between 1988 and 1990, out of the total female population, the gross enrolment ratios annually were 85, 64 and 32 per cent for primary, secondary and tertiary respectively. Girls are disadvantaged in terms of the quality, relevance and appropriateness of education and training they receive. There is also a pronounced discrepancy in educational attainment between rural and urban communities and between males and females, a factor which has adverse implications for Africa's recovery and long-term development. Africa's education system is pyramidal, with a broad base at the primary level moving precipitously through the secondary level to a narrow apex at the tertiary level. In this scenario, women's access to education is concentrated at the lowest level. Approximately 23 per cent of primary school graduates enters secondary institutions while less than 3 per cent of those who leave secondary school enter tertiary levels of education, gender discrepancies increased from the lower to the upper levels. The implementation of the education policy implicit in Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) and which advocates focusing on the promotion of universal primary education, would tend to saturate the economy with primary school graduates while only a handful of university and

technical level graduates would be available with few skills to confront the integrated and technology-driven global economy.

32. The adult female literacy rate of less than 50 per cent in Africa is the lowest in the world. In 1990, the adult literacy rate of males was 61 per cent while that of females was 39 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa. There is a high level of illiteracy among women, a serious impediment to development in the region. In most countries, the formal education system is still too small - or too few pupils emerge from it successfully - to reduce the absolute number of illiterates, while non-formal education programmes are not sufficiently widespread to compensate. The continued crisis in the education sector can be explained, to a large extent, by the sharp decline in expenditure on education and the rapid population growth compounded by inappropriate investment in human resources and misallocation and mismanagement of resources, as well as negative aspects of SAPs. Levels of illiteracy in the region have steadily been on the increase since the beginning of the last decade and are projected to reach 146.8 million by the year 2000, compared to 132.3 million in 1980.

33. The educational process reinforces existing gender inequalities which in turn shapes the perceptions that influence curriculum designers, textbook writers, audio-visual aids designers as well as teachers and pupils. However, the impact of appropriate policies and programmes to address the gender disparities in education is yet to be assessed. Decisions on what is to be learnt at what level and by whom and delivered by whom are male-dominated thus perpetuating gender-based stereotypes. This renders the curriculum inappropriate.

34. Certain socio-cultural constraints impede women's access to vocational and technical education and training thus making it difficult for them to acquire higher and relevant technical skills. Through training, member States have taken some initiative to strengthen the capacities of African women. Some of these initiatives include training in gender analysis and planning, entrepreneurial skills and management, and extension services, access to credit and new technologies, and research and policy support. Some bilateral agencies and United Nations specialized agencies, subregional and regional organizations, including the UNECA African Centre for Women, have made further efforts to strengthen the capacities of women farmers and entrepreneurs through staff training; training of extension workers; training women in technical and income-generating skills and food processing; training of women's groups and training of non-literate women through the use of audio-visual materials. Despite these efforts, critical gaps still remain, especially in relation to insufficient training in gender analysis and planning at all levels to enhance the advancement of women. In addition, initial, refresher and advanced training has been lacking and where it exists, it has been at the low level and not relevant to employment requirements. Vocational and technical education must be integrated into the curriculum as part of mainstream education. It is essential that in the future such programmes be oriented towards the special needs of the youth.

35. Paragraph 191 of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies states that women should be viewed as users and agents of change in science and technology. Their technological, scientific knowledge and managerial skills should be improved in

order to enhance their participation in industrial production, innovation, productive design, product adaptation and production techniques. In a number of African countries, measures have been introduced to increase women's participation through revision of the school curricula and the promotion of equal opportunities in vocational training and the introduction of appropriate technology. In spite of these efforts, the involvement of women in science and technology and their contribution to the process of industrialization is still minimal. Women's participation in science and technology subjects at higher levels as well as their participation in scientific research and the formulation of science and technology policies should therefore be promoted. African females will benefit from UNESCO's Project 2000+ which aims at promoting scientific and technological literacy for all.

36. While the low level of development in science and technology including industrial, information and communication technologies in the region affect the socio-economic well-being of the populations, the lives of women who are overburdened with the responsibilities of sustaining the livelihoods of their families are even more burdensome. The application of science and technology should benefit women in both the formal and informal sectors. In both rural and urban areas, women shoulder heavy and laborious tasks of agricultural activities, which could be greatly eased by the adoption of simple and appropriate environmentally sound technologies. The direct linkage between access to and application of science and technology and the lives of women cannot be overemphasized. There is no doubt that science and technology are the driving forces of economic and social development, and hence the need to include the direct involvement of women. Technology is gradually changing African societies and it is essential that women benefit from it and participate in the process from the design level to the application stage. This implies their involvement in the transformation, conservation and increased commercialization of the locally available materials. This will only be achieved if girls and young women are encouraged to study and apply science and technology.

C. Women's vital role in culture, the family and socialization

37. African societies are products of a common historical evolution, enriched by diverse cultures, languages and composed of different ethnic or religious communities. Individuals within those societies have their collective identities as members of families, communities, ethnic or religions groups, nations and increasingly, a global society. The delicate balance between the rights of the individual and the society, and the groups within a society should be respected. In particular, there should be active encouragement for the social integration of the disadvantaged, particularly women, the vulnerable and the marginalized in society, in order to reconnect and integrate them into the community, through the enhancement of their potential and by making all institutions of societies more accessible to them. It is of great importance that such a process begins with the youth. It should be done within the framework of shared values in order to protect social and cultural diversity, including stability and welfare, and to advance towards an equitable society that ensures respect for all including minority rights.

38. In Africa, heavy responsibilities fall squarely on those who have had to assume increasingly new roles in addition to their traditional ones. The role of the women in holding the family fabric and functions together is therefore a critical one. On the other hand, men have been losing some of their traditional roles without taking on new ones. This has resulted in inordinate family dynamics such that the working hours of the woman have increased while the hours spent by men working for the well-being of the family have greatly decreased. It is thus necessary for men to share family responsibilities to redress this imbalance for the well-being of the family. At the same time, some cultures often perpetuate traditional practices that are harmful to the health of women. In this connection, some countries have adopted legal and constitutional measures aimed at eliminating these practices. A strategy for information, education and communication (IEC) aiming at improving the image and role of African women through the media and school manuals should be developed. Such a strategy should also be targeted at the youth.

39. The family is the basic unit of the society which establishes ethics, cultural values, behavioural attitudes and patterns, that influence the conduct of individuals in society. However, in Africa, the fabric of the family has become greatly challenged by prevailing problems associated with economic deterioration which continue to impoverish many households. Unemployment, internal and external displacement, terrorism and migration to urban centres have disrupted family relations and family social systems. As a consequence, young family members have lost the social, economic and emotional support of the family often falling victim to delinquent behaviour and drug abuse.

40. In addition, recurrent natural disasters, civil strife and ethnic conflicts have created serious hardship for families. The displacement of families during these crises deprives them of the support of the extended family system and this has serious social and cultural implications. The family is the primary source of economic and social protection for those who cannot support themselves due to disability, illness, age, unemployment, displacement and other causes. In this context, the burden falls disproportionately on women who have had to assume greater responsibilities and other roles in addition to their traditional ones. Governments must provide assistance through social welfare and social protection schemes and programmes, especially targeted at women. Single-parent, particularly women heads of households make up a large proportion of the poor in many African societies in recent times. Governments and community organizations should make particular effort to ensure that single-parent families receive the social support they need in the form of economic support for the family and child-care support for single working parents.

41. Socialization is the process by which a child is taught the roles he or she is to play in society. This process determines how adult men and women behave as chief agents of socialization in families, schools and communities. In Africa, roles assigned to men and women are pre-determined and different. The family as an agent of socialization assigns different status, values and roles to girls and boys. In some countries, discrimination against women and girls starts before birth with parental and societal attitudes that promote a preference for sons over daughters. Young women and girls should be accorded equal opportunities to grow and to develop their full potential in their productive and reproductive roles. There must be concerted effort to promote a

cultural environment where girls and boys grow and work together as equal partners for sustainable development and peace. In many African countries, women's culturally disadvantaged position, low self-esteem, lack of confidence coupled with lack of time and low motivation limit their capacity to take advantage of opportunities available to them in order to eradicate poverty. Social and cultural traditions and practices should be reformed towards a common civil code that upholds the dignity of women as equal partners with men in the family including removal of gender bias in matters of marriage, divorce, custody and property rights.

D. Improvement of women's health, reproductive health including family planning and integrated population programmes

42. The 1992 Dakar/Ngor Declaration on Population, Family and Sustainable Development stated, inter alia, that population policies and programmes should be part of sustainable development strategies. The programme of action of ICPD (1994) further recognized that human beings are at the centre of sustainable development. However, the inability to integrate population factors in African development plans effectively, in a bid to harmonize population and economic growth rates, still persists. Africa had an estimated population of 644 million in 1992 which is expected to grow at an annual rate of 2.9 per cent to the year 2000. The region has the world's highest fertility rate, the lowest life expectancy (49 years for males and 52 for females), the highest infant mortality rate (114 deaths per 1,000 live births), one of the highest maternal mortality rates and one of the highest dependency ratios (47 per cent under 15 years and 3 per cent over 65). These figures underscore the urgency to address the needs of the youth, which constitutes the most vital resource for the future. Other reproductive health needs are indicated by an unacceptably high rate of unsafe abortions, which account for up to 30 per cent of maternal mortality in some African countries, and the growing concern of teenage pregnancy. In some African countries, nearly two thirds of the cases of septic abortions come from the 15-19 age group. With respect to such cases, it is necessary to provide the requisite information to the youth so that they can make informed decisions and choices about their own sexuality and fertility, but also parents who transmit the social values and define gender roles should be reached, as well as policy makers so that they create the necessary policy environment. In addition, in the 1980s, population growth rates exceeded economic growth rates in 32 African countries. The gap between fertility and mortality is widening - i.e. more children are being born while less people are dying. It doubled between 1972 to 1994 and is expected to double again by 2017. The demographic trends have had many negative consequences on the health and quality of women's lives. The unavailability of adequate health services and inaccessibility to information, coupled with the presence of chronic diseases such as malaria and malnutrition, leave many women unable to cope with the physical demands of pregnancy. Consequently, maternal morbidity is widespread and the lifetime risk of maternal death for African women is 1 in 20 compared to 1 in 10,000 in developed countries. The effects of STDs and the emergence of HIV/AIDs pandemic on women has added to the already existing vulnerable status of women's health. The rising rates of unwanted and unplanned pregnancies among women under 20 years of age not only compromise their reproductive health but deny a majority of them opportunities to complete their education and acquire

decision-making skills which will enable them to make informed choices about their fertility.

43. Population and development related policies and programmes in Africa must strive to improve the status of women while at the same time seeking to reduce the rates of population growth, infant and child mortality and maternal mortality. Therefore, the full participation and partnership of both men and women is required in both their productive and reproductive lives, including shared responsibilities in the care and nurturance of children as well as in the experience of reproductive health and rights. In this context, the provision of quality family planning services is essential. Such services must ensure that both men and women have the right to be informed and have access to safe, effective and affordable methods of family planning of their choice. The practice of reproductive health and family planning is not only for the spacing of pregnancy but includes the protection against STDs at each stage of the reproductive life cycle. It is essential that these services be sensitive to the needs of the youth who constitute a high risk category. Thus, the complete integration of the full range of reproductive health services in the primary health care systems as well as their decentralized delivery and management will contribute significantly to the promotion of women's health, reproductive health, safe motherhood and the achievement of responsible parenthood.

44. While it is acknowledged that African economies can no longer provide free health services to all, it is imperative likewise to acknowledge that a very large proportion of women constitute the poorest of the poor. It is therefore necessary to alleviate their plight and to target subsidized health services to such women who also carry the burden of providing health care to their families, in order to improve their situation. To reach these objectives, IEC strategies and efficient services in the field of family health should be adopted to promote family planning and improve maternal and child health, particularly in the rural areas.

E. Women's relationship and linkages to environment and natural resource management

45. Poverty is a major cause and consequence of environmental degradation and is compounded by scarcity, depletion and mismanagement of resources for the initiation, stimulation and promotion of sustainable development for a growing population. Environmental degradation has had and continues to have an adverse impact on the population as a whole. Women specifically experience this impact in terms of their changing role and the traditional division of labour. This has meant an increase in their workload of domestic chores. Often women have no choice but to exploit natural resources in order to survive, even though they may possess knowledge to protect the environment and its sustainability. Thus, in the absence of alternative means of livelihood, poverty is strongly linked to the mismanagement of natural resources and the consequent environmental pressure which results in environmental degradation. In the urban areas, the major environmental problems are linked to poor sanitation and increasing poverty. Additionally, unsustainable patterns of production and consumption in developed countries do not reflect concern for environmental conservation and rehabilitation. Natural resources are central to the livelihood of poor rural

households and it is women who are responsible for processing and, to a lesser but increasing extent, growing and processing agricultural products. Women are key environmental managers, with profound knowledge of plants, animals and ecological processes with which they are intimately involved. Such knowledge should not be lost to the future generations of women. Housing being a basic human right needs to be adequately addressed and reinforced. Residential struggles are more and more prevalent and women are at the forefront.

Land and property rights

46. Despite African women's active role in the management and creation of the urban and rural environment, they are discriminated against with respect to their access to and control over land and property. In some countries, legislation, traditions and harmful practices relating to religion prevent women from inheriting and having control over land and property. 1/ Their poverty cannot change unless they gain something out of the work they do. Women need land to be used as collateral when they need to borrow money from financial institutions.

47. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in 1992 culminated in the recognition of the crucial role of women in sustaining the physical, natural and socio-economic environment. UNCED adopted the "Global Action for Women Towards Sustainable Development" as elaborated in chapter 24 of Agenda 21. Experiences in many parts of Africa have shown that women play a critical role in environmental management, conservation and protection. They are also the first to suffer as environmental changes affect their ability to obtain firewood, energy, water, food and other resources for household and economic activities. Ongoing rapid environmental and economic degradation as well as natural and man-made disasters in Africa drastically affect the lives of women and children in rural and urban areas. Special attention in rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes should be given to women's pressing needs for vital natural resources through the design of environmental and sustainable strategies addressing these needs.

48. Regrettably, women have been largely absent in decision-making and in the implementation of environmental projects and programmes. Furthermore, their commitment, experiences and knowledge in natural resources management and environmental protection has not been recognized. A crucial constraint for women's involvement in both agriculture and environmental activities is their lack of natural resource tenure rights, information, extension services and training, involvement in decision-making. In addition, traditional and religious practices, more than laws, prevent women from inheriting and controlling land and other resources, on an equal basis with the men. Lack of appropriate technology, recognition and legitimization of indigenous science and technology, particularly women's knowledge, has also contributed to environmental degradation, food insecurity and increased women's work.

F. The political empowerment of women

49. Democracy is instrumentally linked to human rights and as defined in the African Charter on Human and People's Rights and the 1993 Vienna Programme of Action, is based on the freely expressed will of people (men, women and youth) to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural systems. In Africa, the process of democratization has been put in motion with varying success. Given the long-standing discrimination against women in Africa, specific and critical measures should be taken to enable women's full participation in decision-making formulation as well as access to all organizations of society. The concept of civil and political rights as well as economic, social and cultural rights has provided individuals and groups subjected to discrimination with the means for correcting injustice and enhancing social integration. African Governments can promote this process by creating a climate of tolerance for the rights of all persons, particularly women, by clearly stating the rights which all can expect to enjoy and by ensuring that their legal systems are open to all and effective as remedy for limitations on those rights.

50. Women constitute half of humankind and throughout the world they enter all areas of activity, thereby modifying humankind's vision of the world. Women therefore are half of its resource of talent, ability and potential, and their participation in decision-making is logical because they are the major contributors to national economies through their paid and unpaid labour; politically, half of those served and represented by Governments are women. Women's participation in the decision-making process world wide has been one of those areas where there has been little notable progress. In 1993, only six countries had women heads of government while the average proportion of women in parliaments worldwide had dropped to 10 from 12 per cent in 1989.

51. In Africa, the low representation of women in the political decision-making process can be attributed, inter alia, to several factors: socio-cultural perceptions and inhibitions; lack of finances; lack of political commitment, consciousness and goodwill, and general lack of rural infrastructure. Under the circumstances, the majority of women are denied the opportunity to play their economic and intellectual roles to the fullest extent, besides that of wife and mother. Although most of the women participate in the electoral process as voters, very few offer themselves as candidates. Another impediment to women's participation in the political decision-making process is the high illiteracy rate among women in the region. This has repercussions on women's awareness, as well as on their level of participation in political life. The limited participation by women in political life is closely associated with the less visible factors such as uneven distribution of roles and responsibilities between men and women, persistent differentiations in the field of training and occupation and the economic dependency of women.

52. Similarly, both at the regional and international levels, the representation of women is still low especially at the higher levels of professional categories. This situation persists despite the fact that the majority of African countries have ratified various United Nations conventions supporting the empowerment of women. Thus whereas globally there are a few women heading international organizations such as UNHCR and UNFPA, no African

regional organization has appointed women to the top echelon of their hierarchy. Notwithstanding the fact that the entry of women in their employment ranks has been facilitated by the establishment of women's units, organizations such as OAU, ECA, SADC, PTA, ECOWAS and ADB need to tap the immense potential and alternative world-view and perspectives of health management, economic development and conflict resolution, among others, that women have and which should be used in solving the multiplicity of the region's problems.

53. Policies to promote social and political integration must guarantee opportunities for women's full participation in decisions that affect their interests. A guiding objective in this very critical area of concern is the need to engender and strengthen factors that promote the full participation of women in power structures and decision-making at all levels. This should encompass the participation of women in a wide range of organizations and institutions in the public and private sectors. This is one of the most critical areas of this Platform in terms of its potential for strengthening democracy, for ensuring equality in the long term and for enriching the development process with diversity and innovation. Several initiatives have been taken within the region towards enhancing popular participation, for instance, the Khartoum Declaration of 1988 which was the outcome of the International Conference on the Human Dimension of Africa's Economic Recovery and Development, attended by African policy and decision makers. Similarly, the Abuja Declaration on Participatory Development: The Role of Women in Africa in the 1990s was very specific on the measures that have to be undertaken in this field. Another milestone was the Arusha Declaration of 1990 (African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation) which serves as a guideline for Governments, NGOs, grass-roots organizations, youth and women's groups, etc., for the implementation of the principles of the Charter, namely human rights, democracy, development of a civil society, good governance and accountability.

G. Women's legal and human rights

54. The concept of human rights is fundamental to all aspects of human development. It is a fundamental principle of the United Nations, its Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Human rights are inalienable birthrights for every human being regardless of race, religion, creed, nationality or sex and they are not dependent on the State. Since 1949, numerous human rights instruments and resolutions have been proclaimed. The numerous resolutions in favour of equal rights of women and girls, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the African Heads of State and Governments Declaration on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child are all guidelines for improving the legal and human rights status for women. The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, now signed by over 34 countries in the African region, explicitly acknowledges that extensive discrimination against women, which continues to exist, violates the principle of equality of rights and respect for human dignity.

55. Most African countries have set in motion measures to provide in their constitutions for fundamental rights and freedoms to both men and women and have mandated the equality de jure for all their citizens in line with provisions of the Convention and the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. A recent comparative study on national laws on the rights and status of women in the region shows that in some cases some progressive changes are taking place in specific areas affecting women but that the changes have been made in a piecemeal and uncoordinated manner; thus, situations exist where the potential advancement in a certain area is negated by the lack of change in another intricately related area. African countries also have the problem of constitutional rights being abrogated by negative customary and/or religious laws and practices. For example, there are countries where, regardless of age, employment or civil status, women remain as minors under the guardianship of husbands, fathers, brothers or even sons. In some countries, and despite the provisions of the right to work stipulated in labour laws, married women may not work if their husbands refuse on the basis that they are the heads of the households. In others, there are provisions in the laws that a woman who marries a man from another nationality loses her citizenship and this will further complicate the situation with regard to children. While there are countries in which a woman, irrespective of her marital status, can own and manage property in her own right, sue and be sued in her own name, there are countries where a woman cannot appear in court without the permission or the assistance of her husband or male relative.

56. National laws and policies in Africa should be evaluated and reformed against the background of the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Conference on Human Rights. The Conference took historic new steps in declaring that violation of women's rights is violation of human rights, supported the creation of new mechanism of complaint through the existence of an optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the appointment of a Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women. Paragraph 18 of the Vienna Declaration stated explicitly that the human rights of women and of the girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. It called for the full and equal participation of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life, at the national, regional and international levels, and the eradication of all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex. It further stated that gender-based violence and all forms of sexual harassment and exploitation, including those resulting from cultural prejudice and international trafficking are incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person and must be eliminated. In paragraph 36, the Vienna Declaration underlines the importance of the integration and full participation of women as both agents and beneficiaries in the development process, and reiterates the objectives established on global action for women towards sustainable development in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and also in chapter 24 of Agenda 21. The African Platform for Action fully endorses these objectives and obligations for the legal and human rights of women. Government should ratify and implement all those international treaties and standards which promote and protect the rights of women and youth.

57. Despite the increasing pressure for greater participation, large numbers of women continue to be excluded from the benefits of development. Women with

disabilities are the poorest of the poor. They are affected by food insecurity both as women and as disabled persons. There is thus a need to target them directly in all appropriate activities of economic development.

58. Paragraph 277 of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies observed that there is an increasing number of categories of women who, because of their special characteristics, experience not only the common problems experienced by all, but also specific difficulties due to either their socio-economic and health conditions, disability, minority status or a combination of these factors.

59. In paragraph 280, the Nairobi Strategies recommended that additional efforts should be directed towards ensuring the gainful and productive inclusion of these categories of women in mainstream development and in political activities, with priority emphasis being placed on income-generating opportunities. Further, there should be independent and sustained improvement of their condition through the full integration and active participation of women as agents and beneficiaries of development at the same time.

60. During the last decade, the conditions of such special groups of women in Africa have become even worse due to the interplay of a number of external and internal factors, as discussed elsewhere in this Platform for Action.

61. Article 11 (e) of the 1979 Women's Rights Convention is explicit on the rights of women with special needs and states that all States Parties should take appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment, in order to ensure, on the basis of equality of men and women, the same rights in particular "The right of social security, particularly in cases of retirement, unemployment, sickness, invalidity and old age and other incapacity to work, as well as the right to paid leave".

62. Aged and disabled women, widows, internally displaced persons, women in conflict situations, refugees and female-headed households are normally excluded from participating as full members of the community. Policies and programmes developed for such needy women therefore must be geared towards the social integration of these marginalized and disadvantaged women and to guarantee better opportunities for them.

63. The 1975 Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons and the 1982 World Programme of Action in respect of Disabled Persons provide overall frameworks for action, but also point out that problems specific to women have not yet been fully appreciated by society because they are not fully realized and understood.

64. Article 18.4 of the 1981 African Charter on Human and People's Rights states that "The aged and the disabled shall also have the right to special measures of protection in keeping with their physical and moral needs".

65. Policies and programmes concerning the aged and disabled women must focus on the equalization of opportunities and the contributions they can make to society, as well as on their dignity and rights as citizens rather than as objects of charity or welfare.

66. Women are subjected to violence and to the threat of violence in their daily relationships. Violence deprives women of their ability to achieve full equality. It threatens their safety, their freedom and their autonomy. Violence against women is a fundamental violation of human rights which include the right to life, liberty and personal, mental and physical integrity, the right not to be subject to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment, the right to equal protection before the law, and equality within the family. Many cases of violence against women go unreported particularly when violence occurs in the home. The majority of women do not speak out or report to the court on violence but keep silent as victims because of fear, shame or a misplaced feeling that they are somehow responsible. The psychological, emotional and economic conditions of women subjected to physical and emotional abuse may in fact alter their perception of reality in such a way that they perceive themselves as completely helpless and unable to make choices or escape.

67. Although it is noted that in some African countries, violence against women is a criminal offence, many Governments do not address the issue. Certain traditional practices, rape, female genital mutilation, wife battering, incest, sexual harassment are rampant and are harmful to the health of women and the girl-child. Often these practices affect the perceptions of the girl-child to the extent that she does not see herself as a victim. Although many Governments are now concerned with the issue, few have taken legal or constitutional steps to stop the practice. A recent important development is the recognition of women's rights to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health, free from discrimination, coercion and violence as expressed in various international human rights instruments.

68. This Platform emphasizes the need to analyse the roots of violence against women and girls, by their historical, social, cultural or religious origin. A gender analysis of violence against women could lead to solutions that are integrated to include both women and men. Stateless women, refugees and displaced women who no longer have their Governments' legal protection should be highlighted because they are particularly vulnerable. Taking into consideration the inadequacies of the support structures for women victims of violence, this Platform recommends that Governments, non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies establish information and other support services.

H. Involvement of women in the peace process

69. At present, several African countries are embroiled in war, civil strife and conflict caused by a combination of factors including massive violations of human rights and ethnic violence. These situations often impact disproportionately on women resulting in violence, involuntary displacement and flight from the country of origin. Out of an estimated global refugee population of some 20 million, nearly 35 per cent is in Africa. Women and children constitute roughly 80 per cent of this population. The vast majority are destitute refugees, mainly of rural background. They are located in countries facing major economic problems and often in the most remote, poorest and least developed areas. These countries are often unable to absorb the extra burden of refugees and may not be able to provide essential services to their own citizens who are already experiencing unprecedented levels of hardship. In

Africa the population of internally displaced persons is estimated to be 16 million persons, more than 1 million in Ethiopia, 3.5 million in Angola, 2 million in Mozambique, 2 million in Somalia, 500,000 in Uganda, 4.2 million in South Africa, under 1 million in Sierra Leone and 2 million in Rwanda. The absence of a specific mechanism or support system to deal with the plight of the internally displaced renders this group particularly vulnerable and less likely to receive appropriate attention from the international community. The situation of the internally displaced population must be recognized, prioritized and appropriate assistance be sought through UNHCR and other international organizations with requisite mandate in specific areas of need.

70. The indirect toll is far heavier on women and children. By disrupting basic social and health services and by diverting scarce physical, human, financial, material, scientific and technological resources to the development of the machinery of death and destruction, millions of children die from preventable diseases. Critical problems which take the heaviest toll on children include nutritional anaemia, malnutrition-related infection, diarrhoea and other immunizable diseases. An especially pernicious effect of war are the psycho-social stresses resulting from the breakdown of traditional family structures. This breakdown is reflected in the increase of female-headed households, abandoned and orphaned children. Violations of the fundamental rights of women and girls are widespread and universal during times of armed conflict and strife. These violations include torture, rape, murder, disappearance and maltreatment. The widespread and discriminate use of anti-personnel landmines increasingly in internal conflicts has caused untold human suffering and involuntary mass displacement of populations. Such use of landmines inflict excessive damage on civilians in post-conflict situations.

71. Women are rarely included in the decision-making processes related to conflict prevention, resolution and management, or in peace-building initiative. Before conflicts occur, women can be agents of peace and conflict prevention by identifying root causes and opportunities for reconciliation. During the collapse of communities, the role of women is also crucial. They continue to pass on culture, traditions and values to the next generation. They preserve human dignity and social order in the midst of chaos and civil strife. They are the agents of change for building a new society from the ashes of the old. Although women are usually outside the decision-making processes which have produced conflicts in the region, they have shown their concern for the violent inter-State conflicts: at the invitation of the Government of Uganda, in collaboration with OAU and ECA, a Regional Conference on Women, Peace and Development was convened. An important outcome of that Conference is the Kampala Action Plan on Women and Peace. In the same sense, the OAU Heads of States and Government at the June 1993 Summit established, within OAU, a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution.

72. Education is a key factor in development and peace processes. The lack or low level of education of girls and women is a main constraint to the empowerment of women politically, economically and most specifically in the peace process. It limits their access to both the productive resources and the power structure. National Governments and non-governmental organizations are urged to make every possible effort to improve the peace capacities and capabilities of girls and women. Peace education illuminates and advocates the

necessity of eradicating all types of violence in society, at family and community levels. It encourages all people, and in particular girls and women, to take more interest in politics, international affairs and all aspects of decision-making. The participation of women in conflict resolution is their right and their experience is valuable. Governments in Africa should aim at gender parity in peace negotiation and conflict resolutions and should take concrete steps to provide women and men with the necessary training in this area. Moreover, measures should be taken to bring women into peace-keeping, both in civilian and military roles and to reinforce women's roles as peace educators in the family and in society at large.

I. Mainstreaming of gender-disaggregated data

73. The absence of gender-disaggregated data based on separate records for men and women, is a source of gender blindness and gender bias against women. Women are often invisible in statistics and if their unpaid housework were computed as productive output in the national income accounts, global outputs would be increased by more than 30 per cent.

74. Paragraph 364 of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies stated that a stronger data and research base on women should be developed in developing countries and in the regional commissions, in collaboration with the appropriate specialized agencies and that the sharing of information and research data should be encouraged.

75. During the last decade, many African countries have made improvements in the availability of data. However, many gaps remain with respect both to coverage and the quality of gender based and gender-disaggregated data. Even more lacking has been the inclusion of perspectives on and by women in the scarce data available. The availability of timely, valid culturally relevant data is indispensable for gender-responsive policies and programmes.

76. Lack of accurate and reliable data, inadequate dissemination, analysis and effective use of these data presents a handicap for the proper assessment of the contribution of women, and the monitoring of relative improvements in their status in the various sectors. A realistic assessment of the level of women's advancement requires the collection, analysis, utilization and dissemination of gender-aggregated statistical data.

J. Women, information, communication and arts

77. Although information is one of the strongest tools of empowerment, women access and control of media and other sources of information is limited. Most information is targeted at urban areas. In addition, stereotyped portrayal of women as objects rather than people contributing to the development process immensely still continues. The existing type of information does not respond to the needs of the majority of women particularly in the countryside.

78. There is insufficient access to use of mass media in promoting women positive contribution to society. In addition, stereotyped portrayal of women as objects rather than people who are productive prevails.

K. The girl-child

79. The Convention on the Rights of the Child gives the meaning of "child" as every human being below the age of 18 and grants children rights relating to their civil, political, social, economic and cultural lives. However, all available indicators point to the fact that the African girl-child is discriminated upon right from inception resulting in less parental appreciation and care, poor nutrition and unequal access to education.

80. The economic prospects of the developing nations keep declining so also the hope of survival and empowerment of the girl-child whose status is considered inferior right from birth from an early age girls are socialized to put themselves last.

81. Realizing that the girl-child of today is the woman of tomorrow and in view of the noncontroversial fact that the woman's roles are fundamental to the very existence and subsequent progress of society, the girl-child's total upbringing and holistic education needs equal attention and commitment as that of the male child with the provision of subsidized education for the girl as the African economies cannot provide free education per se.

82. Statistics show that in the African educational sector, the gross enrolment ratios for the girl-child is still very low at 18 per cent while the drop-out rate stands at 47.8 per cent as of 1992. There is also a clear trend of low enrolment of girls in the secondary and tertiary levels of education as well as in science, technology and mathematics. The educational process reinforces existing gender inequalities which in turn shapes the perceptions that influence curriculum designers, textbook writers, audio-visual aid designers as well as teachers, methodology, and pupils. Thus decisions on what is to be learned by who and delivered by who are male-dominated. This renders the curriculum inappropriate in relation to gender.

83. Widespread evidence from the majority of African countries indicates that the health and quality of life of girls becomes even more precarious at adolescence as she is faced with the risks of exploitation and unwanted pregnancy, leading on to rejection, abortion and discontinuation of education. Faced with rejection by an unsympathetic society, she is then exposed to the streets and the risks of sexually transmitted diseases with their attendant health implications.

84. The economic conditions as well as the high poverty ratio in developing nations coupled with the socio-cultural values have brought about increased burdens on girls who have at an early age to contribute to the family fortunes either by hawking, trading or being married early at a price. All these and traditional practices that are harmful to the girls such as infibulation and puberty rites and the burden of household chores, constrain the development and attainment of full potentials of the girl-child.

IV. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN

85. Accelerated actions to address the three core issues of the Platform for Action (equality, development and peace) must integrate the gender dimension into all political, social, economic and cultural activities for development. In improving the status, empowerment, participation and decision-making capabilities of women at all levels and in all spheres of life, it is imperative to eliminate social, cultural and individual attitudes and practices that perpetuate gender discrimination. Subordination and discrimination in legislation, as well as in political, economic and social relationships between women and men have to be eliminated wherever they exist. African Governments should take greater account of women's contribution, experience, talents, insights and creativity, in the shaping of the future of the continent. Although the post-Nairobi period has witnessed some improvements in African women's status, it is imperative that setbacks, continuing imbalances and new problems must be clearly identified. It is necessary to devise measures to accelerate the integration of the gender dimension into all political, social, economic and cultural activities aimed at achieving equality, development and peace.

A. Measures required

86. The measures and actions outlined in the following paragraphs have to be implemented at national, subregional and regional and international levels. The process of implementation has to involve a wide array and diversity of partners and actors in development, acting in close concert, collaboration and cooperation. Such actors include Governments, intergovernmental bodies (regional and subregional), international financial institutions, multilateral organizations, United Nations agencies, national and international non-governmental organizations and women's organizations. In all cases, however, national Governments in Africa have to act as leading agents in all actions meant to accelerate the advancement of women. But above all, women as the major stake holders will have to make special efforts to ensure the success of implementation of the African Platform for Action.

1. Women, poverty, insufficient food security and lack of economic empowerment

87. Rationale

The struggle against poverty, the economic empowerment of women and the promotion of sustainable livelihoods for women and youth is a moral, political and economic obligation and responsibility of national Governments and the international community. The poverty experienced by women and their dependants should not be seen only from a welfare perspective. Women and other people living in poverty represent an under-utilization of productive potential. Measures to reduce or eliminate poverty are major parameters of growth, empowerment and overall political stability. Women's deprived right to development should be explicitly recognized. This requires policies that are

gender sensitive that accommodate the needs and interests of the women in poverty as defined and articulated by themselves. It also requires specific and gender-based anti-poverty policies, programmes and actions that are integrated into overall economic planning at local, national, regional and international levels. The realities of people and women in poverty are specific, complex, diverse and dynamic. Besides and beyond income poverty there are many other dimensions of disadvantages, deprivations and ill-being experienced by women and their dependants. These include social discrimination, exclusion, desertion, isolation, physical disability, vulnerability and deprivation. There is also the poverty associated with wars, famine, displaced persons and refugees, imbalanced trade relations and SAPs.

88. Objectives

(a) To mobilize women and youth to participate effectively in all aspects of the implementation of the Platform for Action, with particular regard to economic decision-making;

(b) To eliminate explicit and implicit discrimination against women in the economic sphere;

(c) To ensure the full participation and empowerment of women and girls in society in order to make full use of all human resources in the struggle against multidimensional poverty, particularly through the equal access by women to education, economic opportunities, including production and trade employment, public services, basic health-care services, reproductive health including maternal and child health care and family planning services;

(d) To provide greater and better opportunities at each stage of girls' and women's life for redressing the fundamental gender-based inequities;

(e) To eliminate the factors that accentuate poverty among women;

(f) To ensure that all sectors make a genuine effort to contribute positively to the employment of women;

(g) To recognize and support women's sustainable livelihood and other coping strategies in both the marketed and non-marketed sectors.

89. Proposed actions

(a) Women and Governments in collaboration and full partnership with non-governmental organizations, to organize pressure groups and networks to ensure the implementation of the Platform for Action;

(b) Enact and/or enforce laws that will remove barriers to the economic participation of women, particularly those which relate to property rights, asset holdings, inheritance laws, credit policies, labour and zoning laws and to export processing zones;

(c) Recognize the importance of the informal sector and make all efforts to support it as it is a major source of economic activity for women in both rural and urban areas and make all efforts to promote it;

(d) To adopt firm political commitment to develop the agricultural sector in order to ensure food security and food self-sufficiency along with appropriate measures such as allocation of financial, technical and human resources, and equitable food price policies;

(e) Provide rural women with the necessary means to participate in the process of economic growth by ensuring access to assets and increasing returns on those assets through land reforms, and the effective enforcement of related legislation, resettlement schemes, special credit opportunities, access to and information on markets, access to channels, marketing and managerial strategies and skills, training programmes, improved water connections to impoverished areas, improved agricultural extension for small farmers in general and women farmers in particular, techniques for processing agricultural products, rural roads upgrading and rehabilitation programmes. Special programmes targeted on the mobilization of rural and urban youth should be established and promoted. In all these activities, the gender perspective must be reflected;

(f) Improve the condition of women by providing basic social services, e.g., education, public health, nutrition and child-care facilities;

(g) Formulate and implement specific economic, food security and related policies in support of female-headed households;

(h) Provide land rights on an equitable basis for women and men in terms of ownership and utilization and monitor implementation;

(i) Reduce girls' and women's workload through, among others, provision of appropriate technologies for all aspects of farming and household tasks;

(j) Promote more equitable sharing of work and family responsibilities between men and women boys and girls;

(k) Design special economic schemes for poor women, taking into consideration their multiple responsibilities. Efforts should be geared towards ensuring greater access by the poor to economic resources by forging links with existing facilities and creating new structures suitable to their needs; special economic schemes for poor women should reflect the reality of young women and girls who are forced to abandon their education in order to help take care of the family;

(l) Monitor the full implementation of the recommendations of the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty, with a special emphasis on women;

(m) Facilitate women's decision-making role at the levels of family, community, marketing organizations and the public/political spheres and improve their capacities to promote change and manage development in and through the public and private sectors;

(n) Strengthen local institutions' capacity to train women for environmentally sustainable economic activities;

(o) Transform African debt as a means of financing projects and programmes for the advancement of women;

(p) Give high priority to women for access to food resources made available through development efforts, and fully involve destitute women - particularly refugees, migrants and displaced - in the distribution mechanisms. Introduce measures to make displaced women productive;

(q) Introducing training programmes on regional and external trade operations for small and medium size enterprises;

(r) Within the context of trade promotion programmes at the national and regional levels, targeting of business women in the provision of business support services, including trade information and market intelligence, access to credit, packaging. PTA, COMESA and ECOWAS should provide technical support services on product design and adaption, technology transfers and quality control;

(s) Building capacity in national, subregional and regional trade organizations and business associations to effectively play their role as facilitators, particularly in providing advisory and trade services as well as information on market opportunities including follow-up to the Uruguay Round Agreement so as to promote private sector development and entrepreneurship among women;

(t) Promote programmes aimed at developing micro and small and medium-scale enterprises in production, trade and services, by providing women with training programmes in technical, management and external trade operations;

(u) Promote rural industrialization schemes, thus reducing rural/urban migration through the participation of women in the design, development, promotion and dissemination of food technologies;

(v) Promotion of agriculture-industry linkages through the development of micro, small enterprises in the agro-industries subsector;

(w) Set up an appropriate institutional framework on financial schemes to support programmes and projects for women;

(x) Governments should review their economic policies including structural adjustment programmes which impact negatively on services offered to women with a view to improving their socio-economic status.

2. Inadequate access to education, training, science and technology

90. Rationale

Universal access to basic and quality education for all women and girls is a fundamental right which requires the mobilization of existing and new financial and human resources from public, private and voluntary sources. African Governments must fulfil their commitment to the principles of the 1990 World Declaration on Education for All and to the goals and targets set by themselves in accordance with the Framework for Action to meet Basic Learning Needs. Education is a key factor in the development and well-being of all members of society, therefore priority must be given to the education of girls and women because of their past discrimination and marginalization. Education is also a powerful tool for the social, economic and political integration of women by promoting tolerance, democratic values, political awareness and respect for the human person. Its provision constitutes one of the primary responsibilities of African Governments and civil society. Special efforts need to be made by Governments in relation to the girl-child to ensure parity at all levels.

91. The improvement of women's activities and the development of their capacity to adapt to prevailing economic hardships also require the implementation of training programmes that meet their needs and involving them in scientific and technological developments.

92. Objectives

(a) To provide gender-responsive education and remove disparities from national policies and programmes for universal primary, secondary and higher education and adult literacy;

(b) To achieve gender equality in retention, quality and achievement in both formal and non-formal education by the year 2000;

(c) To take positive actions to encourage women, especially young girls, to enter new fields of science and technology which offer better job opportunities and career prospects.

93. Proposed actions

The Ouagadougou Declaration on the Education of Girls should constitute an important denominator of the proposed actions.

(a) Provide gender sensitive occupational and educational guidance and counselling services to girls at all levels of the education system in respect of career choices and personal development;

(b) Ensure that statistics on education recognize and analyse the issue of gender by appropriate disaggregation of all education data;

(c) Enact and ensure effective implementation of legislation to enforce a minimum basic education of at least nine years;

(d) Give incentives to families to minimize the opportunity cost of girls' education through provision of scholarships/bursaries for the education of girls and the establishment of child-care facilities for young siblings;

(e) Adopt gender appropriate curricula teaching of human rights and the integration of gender-awareness in all aspects of training programmes to eliminate stereotyping;

(f) Enact legislation for and give financial incentives to employers to provide functional literacy and training for unskilled women employees;

(g) Take positive action to promote women's interest in and benefits from scientific and technical education, thus encouraging women to enter non-traditional fields;

(h) To encourage cooperation among African women with the view to promoting sharing of experience in new and traditional technology;

(i) Promote the training and recruitment of female teaching, administrative and technical staff to achieve gender equity using innovations such as special financial incentives; and adopt favourable administrative measures and incentives to encourage them to work in rural areas;

(j) Improve access to schools and provide appropriate and community-based facilities, particularly in rural areas;

(k) Make available basic, civic literacy and functional literacy and life-skill programmes for women and girls;

(l) Promote rural industrialization schemes thus reducing rural-urban migration through the involvement of rural women in agro-based industries;

(m) Conscientize parents and the community at large to the importance of girls' education and the support they should be provided on a continuous basis using all means of information and communication;

(n) Make available appropriate technologies aimed at reducing the workload of women and girls, in order to provide more time for schooling and recreation;

(o) Provide technical and financial support to training programmes for women;

(p) Develop relevant and effective health education programmes for girls and women in both formal and non-formal education;

(q) Adopt strategies to halt the brain drain and to retain Africa's skilled human resources;

(r) Improve the level and status of women in traditionally female careers such as nursing and teaching;

(s) Provide training in gender analysis and gender planning to enable gender-responsive policy and programming;

(t) Promote pre-school education;

(u) Strengthen women's access to training by providing child-care facilities and incorporating child-care costs into training costs;

(v) Strengthen women's entrepreneurial capacity by developing mechanisms which will link the research of women scientists and technologists with the indigenous knowledge of women entrepreneurs.

3. Women's vital role in culture, the family and socialization

94. Rationale

Culture constitutes the totality of people's ways of life, values, moral principles, ideology, religion and social practices. A culture can thus be a force of liberation or oppression. Male-dominated ideologies in Africa have tended to use culture to justify oppressive gender relations. But culture can also be a liberating dynamic force in African society through its various active institution. Governments should now repeal all negative stereotyped cultures that still hinder full advancement of women.

The total integration of women in all levels and activities of the society is a critical need which has to be met within the overall framework of the cultural fabric, the family and the various processes of socialization. In formulating policies, strategies, objectives and actions, the different components that promote the social and cultural integration of women throughout the entire life cycle have to be seen within a consistent framework because they reinforce each other and also promote the development of creativity of rural women. The identity of the woman as an individual has to be recognized and respected.

95. Objectives

(a) To promote the status of women in African societies through maintenance of social cohesion and a balance between universality and quality of the individual;

(b) To recognize and value the role of women in the diverse processes of socialization, particularly at the family and community levels;

(c) Educate women about their religion to prevent misconception that women are subservient to men;

(d) To remove the negative cultural attitudes and harmful traditional practices towards women's participation in public/political spheres through IEC programmes;

(e) To develop policies and laws that provide better material and moral support for the family, that contribute to its stability and that take into account its plurality of forms, particularly the increasing number of single-parent households;

(f) To establish social security measures that are focused on the social, cultural and economic factors behind the rising cost of child-rearing and education as well, to promote and design policies and programmes that are sensitive to the needs of the elderly in the society;

(g) To promote equality of opportunity for family members, especially the rights of women and children in the family;

(h) To promote sports and artistic activities among African women.

96. Proposed actions

(a) Mobilize boys and men to encourage and support the emancipation of girls and women for the development of African societies;

(b) Governments and community leaders must combat culturally biased male and female stereotypes through effective programmes of sustained education and communication, enactment and enforcement of appropriate legislation;

(c) Undertake effective sensitization and IEC programmes designed to change the attitudes and behaviour of African parents with regard to the sound construction of gender roles;

(d) Include in literacy programmes a component on socialization;

(e) Governments should create conducive environment for the development of associative networks for promoting family counselling centres with NGO and community involvement;

(f) Promote increased sharing of roles and responsibilities within the family through innovative media campaigns, school and community education programmes with emphasis on gender equality and non-stereotyped roles of both women and men within the family;

(g) Governments, in close consultation and cooperation with employers, should provide and promote means to facilitate compatibility between labour force participation and parental responsibilities especially for single-parent households with young children;

(h) African Governments should take effective actions to eliminate all forms of coercion and discrimination in policies and practices pertaining to marriages and the family in general. In particular, measures should be adopted and enforced to eliminate child marriages;

(i) Promote, develop and document the positive aspects of African cultures and heritage;

(j) Governments should implement the recommendations of the 1994 International Year of the Family;

(k) To enact legislation to protect women and girls from being ostracized from their immediate families and communities.

4. Improvement of women's health, including reproductive health and family planning and integrated population programmes

97. Rationale

Health care and population-related programmes should be designed to serve the needs of men and women at all ages and must include equal involvement of women in leadership, planning, decision-making, management, implementation, organization and evaluation of services. Governments, NGOs, United Nations agencies and other organizations should take positive steps to include women at all levels of population and health care systems, but above all to integrate population-related issues and health-care activities into overall human development policies and strategies from a balanced gender perspective.

In accordance with the 1994 principles adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development, everyone has the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. Therefore, appropriate measures must be taken to ensure universal access to health care services, including those related to reproductive health care which encompasses family planning and sexual health for both men and women. Population-related policies and programmes must advance gender equality and equity and improve the quality of women's lives by enabling them to exercise their rights to plan and control their own fertility and to participate fully at all levels of the implementation of population and human development programmes.

98. Objectives

The objectives with regard to health, reproductive health care including family planning and population are to integrate fully population-related policies and balanced gender concerns into:

(a) Development strategies, planning, decision-making and resources allocation at all levels in order to meet the needs and improve the quality of life of present and future generations;

(b) All aspects of development planning in order to promote social justice and to eradicate poverty through sustained economic growth in the context of sustainable development;

(c) Another objective is to raise the quality of life for all people through appropriate population and human development policies and programmes targeted at the eradication of poverty and human resource development. Since

women are generally the poorest of the poor and are at the same time key actors in the development process, a major objective is to eliminate all kinds of gender imbalances and discrimination against women as a prerequisite to eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable human development;

(d) To promote research on traditional medicine and health practices;

(e) Making budgetary allocations to women's health and issues commensurate with the critical and central nature of women's health;

(f) Ensuring equitable representation by women in professional and managerial positions in the health sector;

(g) Reduce maternal and infant mortality by 50 per cent by the year 2015;

(h) To improve post-natal facilities and provide free health care for children under five years of age;

(i) To promote the nutritional status of adolescent girls, pregnant women and lactating mothers.

The objectives on HIV/AIDS are to:

Control the scourge of HIV/AIDS by urging African Heads of State and Government to implement the Declaration on HIV/AIDS that they adopted in July 1992 in which they decided:

(a) To sensitize 95 per cent of the adult and youth population by 1995 about HIV/AIDS, how it is transmitted, how to protect themselves and others against it and also ensure that each government department of health will have prepared a plan of action on the control of the disease;

(b) To elaborate a plan of action on how to control HIV/AIDS in Africa;

(c) To sensitize women with a view to enable them to negotiate the practice of engaging in protected sexual practices without risk, especially when they know that their sexual partners are not doing so;

(d) To promote within the family and between partners the spirit of dialogue that permits mutual protection against HIV/AIDS and give the necessary support when one of them is infected with the disease.

99. Proposed actions

(a) Incorporate population and gender concerns into all national development strategies, plans, policies and programmes and ensure women's full participation as decision makers in these processes;

(b) To mobilize adequate resources for research, documentation and services relating to the impact of stress and risk-related to the environment on the health of women;

(c) Increase the accessibility, availability and affordability of primary health care services and reproductive health facilities and ensure that the design of health interventions takes into account women's specific health needs, multiple responsibilities and the demands on their time;

(d) Promote social justice and eradicate poverty through people-centred and sustainable economic growth policies so as to meet equitably the health needs of women of present and future generations;

(e) Promote safe motherhood by ensuring pre-natal, peri-natal and post-natal care for the mother s and child's health;

(f) Promote community-based family services aimed at informing on all choices of family planning methods in order to space, postpone or limit pregnancies, particularly in rural areas and involve men in this process;

(g) Plan IEC in the home and in all forums where the youth gather in order to promote family life education;

(h) Decrease maternal and infant mortality rate by 50 per cent by the year 2015;

(i) Prevent and reduce the incidence of and provide treatment for STDs;

(j) Actively safeguard the mental health of families through the provision of health laws, facilities and counselling; enact appropriate legislation to eradicate traditional practices which are harmful to girl's and women's health (e.g., female genital mutilation and child marriage).

On population and family planning:

(a) Provide safe, accessible, affordable and quality reproductive health care including family planning services to all those who need them without discrimination;

(b) Adopt and enforce measures to ensure that women and men can exercise their responsibility and right to decide freely the number and timing of births that they desire;

(c) Provide timely and accurate information to enable men, women and youth to make informed choices about their sexuality and health;

(d) Enlist the support of men in safeguarding the reproductive health of their sexual partners through sensitive and appropriate programmes that target men;

(e) Provide updated gender-sensitive training and information to health care providers to empower them to give compassionate, appropriate and timely reproductive health services to women at all stages of their life cycle;

(f) Ensure equal representation of women as key decision makers at all levels of population and health policy formulation, programming and

implementation in order to ensure the incorporation of balanced gender concerns;

(g) Mobilize and allocate more financial and human resources to the health sector incorporating reproductive health and family planning and health sectors in order to reverse the observed decline in overall health and well-being of women, men, adolescents and children;

(h) Integrate reproductive health services in the primary health care systems and adopt innovative approaches which will involve communities as active participants as well as beneficiaries;

(i) Ensure better reproductive health including family planning coverage by adopting an integrated development approach through multidisciplinary activities in order to outreach rural families involving the joint efforts of social partners, NGOs and communities;

(j) Ensure targeted measures on AIDS in the field of awareness, information, education and protection.

Combat the spread of AIDS by accelerating the implementation of the 1992 Declaration on AIDS and the Child in relation to, inter alia:

(a) Working out a Plan of Action to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS;

(b) Ensuring that 100 per cent of every country's adults know how HIV is transmitted and how to protect themselves and others from infection;

(c) Mounting awareness-raising activities to ensure negotiating skills for women to practise safe sex techniques especially when they are aware that their spouses/partners are involved in high-risk behaviours;

(d) Organizing activities that promote caring relationships within families in a context in which partners will protect each other from HIV and provide support in the event that either partner develops AIDS;

(e) Provide financial support for scientific research on African pharmacopoeia for the intention of vaccines on AIDS and malaria.

5. Women's relationship and linkages to environment and natural resource management

100. Rationale

The development and maintenance of human habitat is not possible without the participation of both men and women. The economic agenda cannot be complete without focusing on land rights and ownership for women. Women are crucial in making a sound sustainable environmental programme. There is need to make women with disabilities visible in their role as managers and users of the environment.

101. Objectives

(a) To ensure that gender/population, environmental and poverty eradication factors are integrated in sustainable development policies, plans and programmes;

(b) To ensure that customary laws and harmful practices linked to religion that discriminate against women are reviewed and amended to include the rights of women to land;

(c) To create awareness among women regarding their dependency on the environment and how this impacts upon the natural resource base;

(d) To establish, strengthen and maintain institutions responsible for environment and women's issues;

(e) To mainstream environmental concerns into the planning and policy process, upgrade the work of women in natural resource management and to teach youth on what constitutes nature and respect for nature.

102. Proposed actions

(a) Analyse the structural linkages between gender relations, poverty, environment and development and integrate demographic and gender factors into environmental impact assessments and other planning and decision-making processes aimed at achieving sustainable development;

(b) Undertake measures to enhance the full participation of women at all levels of decision-making to achieve sustainable use of natural resources;

(c) Ensure that environmental protection laws take due cognizance of women's concerns;

(d) To develop relevant science curricula to incorporate current advances in science and technology and to provide for the integration of indigenous science and technology into mainstream teaching;

(e) Develop and make available appropriate and affordable technologies, introduce and educate women, especially rural women, on the application of alternative sources of energy which effectively reduce women's workload while protecting the environment;

(f) Promote, design and disseminate information on appropriate housing and necessary hygienic conditions in rural and urban areas in order to enhance the internal environment;

(g) Legitimize, promote and replicate women's understanding and knowledge systems on the environment as well as their traditional techniques for resource utilization in support of their productive and reproductive functions;

(h) To introduce legal reforms that protect women's rights that ensure women's access to natural resources;

(i) To develop housing infrastructure, potable water, electrification and roads in rural areas;

(j) To ban the dumping and import of toxic waste and solid waste as well as industries that pollute the environment and ensure that waste-generating energy using technologies are not dumped in Africa;

(k) Women and youth should be fully integrated in afforestation programmes and environmental preservation.

6. The political empowerment of women

103. Rationale

The empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of their political, social, economic and health conditions are highly critical areas of concern for the Platform for Action. The full participation and equal partnership of both women and men is required in all aspects of development.

Women in Africa receive much less formal and informal education than men, and at the same time, their knowledge, talent and abilities to cope with a highly adverse environment are hardly ever recognized. Women's inherent knowledge, talent and organizational and managerial abilities should be fully recognized as attributes for their active participation in politics and decision-making processes. Similarly, the power relations that impede women's full participation and attainment of healthy and fulfilling lives operate at many levels of society and they should be fully recognized and adequately addressed.

104. Objectives

(a) To promote solidarity among women of all ages and social background;

(b) To initiate and implement policies and programmes that are designed to improve women's access to secure livelihoods and economic resources, alleviate their heavy responsibilities and tasks with regard to farm and housework and child care, and remove legal impediments to their full participation in public life;

(c) To raise political and social awareness through effective programmes of civic education and mass communication and ensure that women are given responsibilities at the social, cultural and political and trade union levels;

(d) To improve the status of women in order to enhance their decision-making capacity at all levels in all spheres of life;

(e) To promote a democratic and harmonious partnership between women and men in order to achieve equality at all levels;

(f) To increase the numbers of women politicians and parliamentarians and trade union leaders.

105. Proposed actions

All development partners and actors should act to empower women and should take concrete actions to eliminate inequalities between men and women by:

(a) Establishing mechanisms and strengthening chances for women's full and equal participation and equitable representation at all levels of the political process, power structures and decision-making in each community and society, and enable women to articulate their concerns and needs;

(b) Adopting appropriate measures to improve women's ability to earn income beyond traditional occupations, achieve economic self-reliance and ensure women's equal access to the labour market and social security systems. The private sector should support these measures;

(c) Adopting specific measures including affirmative actions to redress past and present imbalances between women and men;

(d) Mobilizing and sensitizing both women and men, NGOs, political parties and pressure groups including trade unions to support and promote and encourage women candidates at all political levels and support women aspiring to political careers, identify and encourage them to take part in politics and governance. The selection must be based on careful consideration of their commitment of candidates to promote women's interests;

(e) Documents to institute legislation that protects and promote the status, rights and well-being of women with disabilities and to ensure their effective representation in decision-making;

(f) Governments should appoint more women - at least 35 per cent - with due regards to their competence decision-making positions in key ministries, such as foreign affairs, defence, finance, economic planning and development;

(g) Information and training particulars should be provided to motivate women to participate in the political process. Political parties and pressure groups should encourage women to take part in local and national elections, and other competitive leadership situations;

(h) Taking further action to correct the low representation of women at the regional level and in the United Nations system, particularly at decision-making levels;

(i) Adopt specific measures to ensure equal participation of women in decision-making at the community level;

(j) To invite parliamentarians, politicians, and all concerned institutions to promote and implement a Plan of Action adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union to reduce the disparity between men and women in political life.

7. Women's legal and human rights and women with special needs

106. Rationale

Nearly 20 years ago, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted. As of 20 May 1994, 20 African countries had neither ratified nor implemented it. And among those which have ratified many have entered reservations which limit the socio-economic status of women.

The African Platform for Action urges firm political commitment and concrete action towards the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

In most African countries, violence against women in domestic, private or public places has increased to alarming levels. This is further exacerbated by gender bias in the administration of justice, conflicts which arise between the rights of women and certain traditional and customary practices, cultural prejudices and extremism as well as armed conflicts. Governments are urged to put an end to this unacceptable situation.

Women's rights are universal and indivisible from human rights. The equal status of African women and their legal and human rights should be integrated into the mainstream of African Governments' legislative, judicial and administrative bodies. The African Platform for Action endorses and urges action towards the eradication of all forms of discrimination against women, whether overt or covert. It also supports the universal ratification and implementation by all States of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

In line with the Vienna Declaration (para. 38), this Platform stresses the importance of working towards the elimination of violence against women in public and private life, the elimination of gender bias in the administration of justice and eradication of any conflicts which may arise between the rights of women and the harmful effects of certain traditional or customary practices, cultural prejudices and religious extremism and armed conflict. The Platform further endorses the view that violations of the human rights of women in situations of armed conflict are violations of the fundamental principles of international human rights and humanitarian law.

107. Objectives

(a) To empower women with knowledge about their rights, and the ability to attain them;

(b) To remove discriminatory and oppressive laws and practices by enacting laws and ensuring their implementation;

(c) To ensure that conventions, treaties, instruments and charters on women's rights are implemented. This, inter alia, includes the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the African

Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Declaration on the Rights of the Child (Dakar Consensus), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and on Civil and Political Rights, and the Convention against torture, other inhuman or degrading treatment and the Abuja Treaty;

(d) To assess implications of certain penal codes with regard to women's and children's rights;

(e) To eradicate gender bias in law enforcement and the administration of justice;

(f) To increase the participation of women at decision-making levels and the administration of justice.

108. Proposed actions

With regard to women's legal and human rights, action should be taken to:

(a) Urge Governments which have not yet done so to sign and ratify without resolution the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the African Charter for Human and Peoples' Rights and other legal instruments concerning women and organize campaigns to this end;

(b) Adopt strategies for effective national implementation and consolidation of internationally accepted norms and standards on women's rights;

(c) Reform the judicial system to make it more responsive to gender issues and establish and/or strengthen institutions to support and assist women to enjoy their rights;

(d) Socialize boys and girls to develop awareness and respect for the equality between the sexes;

(e) Eliminate violence against women and girls and the negative image portrayed by the media and encourage the latter to report on women's legal issues and to create public awareness on the violation of human and women's rights;

(f) Provide accurate information on the situation of women to human rights bodies and widely disseminate information on women's rights;

(g) Promote legal literacy and build on the existing initiatives by NGOs to create the necessary infrastructure for reaching women at all levels; and develop indicators to evaluate the impact of legal literacy programmes;

(h) Introduce and/or strengthen the concepts of human and women's rights at all levels of formal and non-formal education;

(i) Guarantee the right of all women to buy, sell, own, inherit and administer property and the absolute right to work;

(j) Introduce the right of petition through the preparation of an optional protocol to the Convention to provide for complaints procedures and increase resources to provide training, advisory services and technical assistance in the implementation of the Convention. The OAU should also introduce the right of petition through the adoption of an optional protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights;

(k) Develop indicators to evaluate the impact of legal literacy programmes;

(l) Set up mobile legal clinics and paralegal services in rural and urban areas to help women understand the provisions and the correct interpretation of laws.

The media should report on women's issues and collaborate with other partners to create public awareness of human and women's rights.

With regard to violence against women, particular attention should be given to:

(a) Adopt and promote the strategic objective to eliminate violence against women, and review existing legislation with a view to making necessary changes to deal with violence;

(b) Provide training and orientation to police and judicial personnel, doctors, social workers, nurses and others to recognize abuses perpetrated against women, and develop national strategies to address the causes of violence through the education system and the mass media;

(c) Organize shelters and support groups and undertake campaigns against violence as well as providing legal assistance to women faced with violence;

(d) Support the work of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, and monitor the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, as well as the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (adopted by the General Assembly in December 1993);

(e) Monitor the situation of violence against women by developing appropriate indicators.

Women with special needs

109. Rationale

Traditionally in Africa, the aged have long been cared for by the extended family system and other community arrangements. However, urbanization, mobility, civil and ethnic strife, frequent droughts and families have weakened and disrupted the extended family system and communal ties.

Most existing systems in the region provide inadequate protection for women with disabilities, the old, widows, internally displaced persons, refugees, and female-headed households. Informal community- and family-based arrangements are

weakening. The demand for social and health services increases, since health problems and costly medical technologies are concentrated among the old and the disabled.

110. Objectives

(a) To develop special programmes for women with special needs and, in doing so, to ensure the active contribution of the women themselves in the planning, design and management of such programmes;

(b) To develop programmes for the disadvantaged and vulnerable women that reflect a true understanding of the underlying needs of each group and which must be both equitable, efficient and culturally appropriate;

(c) To provide social assistance in kind to the poorest groups in society, including disabled and aged women who may not be covered by contributory plans, taking into account their vulnerability stemming from their diminished ability to work;

(d) To encourage informal support systems and offer incentives to families to continue the caretaking of their older and disabled relatives;

(e) To create institutional and policy mechanisms to encourage greater performance of such valuable services such as care for the disabled and ageing populations.

111. Proposed actions

(a) Ensure that women with special needs have access to adequate food, water, shelter, clothing and health care through the provision of income, family and community support and self-help;

(b) Give women with special needs the opportunity to work or to have access to other income-generating opportunities;

(c) Facilitate the integration into society of women with special needs and their active participation in the formulation and implementation of policies that directly affect their well-being;

(d) Ensure that women with special needs benefit from community care and protection in accordance with each society's system of cultural values;

(e) Ensure that women with special needs are able to enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms, including full respect for their dignity, beliefs, needs and privacy;

(f) Continuously monitor programmes designed and implemented for the groups with special needs, and periodically evaluate them in order to ensure that they are reaching their intended beneficiaries.

8. Women in the peace process

112. Rationale

Peace is a prerequisite for the advancement of women. According to the Kampala Action Plan, if peace is to be attained, conflicting factions in society must be reconciled and not polarized. The African traditional way of resolving conflict is often more relevant to our current problems than adversarial methods of adjudication in which there is a winner and a loser, and the winner takes all. Peace is not just the absence of war, violence and hostilities but a situation in which all people have equal access to economic and social justice, and to the entire range of human rights and fundamental freedoms, in which the environment is protected.

Women fleeing from conflict situations should receive special attention to protect the human rights, ensure access to basic facilities and provide them with opportunities to become self-reliant.

Without peace in the countries of the African region, none of the proposed actions in this Platform can be implemented. It is imperative that African Governments work towards the resolution of the conflicts currently plaguing the region but above all, women must be regarded as crucial stake holders in the search for peace and must be included as active participants and contributors in all mechanisms for conflict resolution, particularly the OAU mechanism for conflict prevention, management and resolution.

113. Objectives

(a) To accelerate and enhance the involvement of women including refugees and internally displaced in conflict prevention, management and resolution and peace process;

(b) To promote awareness and recognition of internally displaced persons;

(c) To include more women in the higher hierarchies of the armed forces and the diplomatic service so that they can participate effectively in decision-making regarding peace process;

(d) To ensure the protection of women, children and refugees during wars and other kinds of conflict;

(e) To reduce systematically military expenditure and channel it to economic activities for women;

(f) To stop the planting of landmines in agricultural fields and bombings in order to ensure the safety of women and children;

(g) Educate women to increase their capacity in peace building and conflict resolution.

114. Proposed actions

Peace making, maintenance and education is a life-long process that is based on the concept of partnership between men and women and between people. It expounds and advocates the necessity of eradicating all types of violence in society, at the family land community levels. In this connection, the proposed actions are to:

(a) Reduce expenditure on armaments and "defence" and reallocate the financial resources so saved to improve science and technology for peaceful development and social services especially for women. OAU jointly with the United Nations should establish mechanism to monitor and expose the profit-motivated sale of arms to African countries;

(b) Reinforce those aspects of culture which enhance the status and importance of women in the peace process;

(c) Identify potential situations of violence in a timely way and take preventive measures to avert it instead of responding only when fighting has actually broken out;

(d) Strengthen the representation of women in peace negotiation mechanisms and support the establishment of women-for-peace networks accredited to OAU, the United Nations and their national, subregional and regional institutions;

(e) Develop and support programmes to introduce, promote and sustain peace;

(f) Recognize and support the national machineries of women and NGOs to work as pressure groups and mobilize necessary action to ensure that women achieve a critical mass at the national cabinet level in key ministries and departments and in international organizations that make or influence policy with regard to matters related to collective security and peace;

(g) Put into place mechanisms to ensure the development and reinforcement of democratic and political rights especially to support grass-roots women's networks;

(h) Support OAU so that it can play a more active role in averting, managing and resolving conflicts and participating in peace-keeping endeavours. To this end, member States are urged to contribute to its Peace Fund for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, as well as establish early-warning mechanisms spearheaded by women to act to avert conflict;

(i) OAU and ECA should be fully supported to review, monitor and appraise the implementation of the Kampala Action Plan on Women and Peace and to regularly convene conferences to assess progress and promote implementation;

(j) African Governments should ensure gender parity in peace negotiations and conflict resolution and take concrete steps to provide both men and women with necessary training in this area;

(k) Refugee victims of sexual violence and their families should be provided with adequate medical and psycho-social care, including culturally appropriate counselling;

(l) The "Review conference on the 1980 Inhuman Weapons Convention" should categorically prohibit the use of landmines in all armed internal and international conflicts;

(m) African Governments should be encouraged to enact legislation prohibiting enlisting of minors in armed conflicts in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Peace education

(a) Make peace education, human rights and humanitarian law a compulsory component of the school and college curricula and syllabi;

(b) Educate emergency service givers and peace keepers to respect the human rights of women, children, displaced peoples and refugees, and sensitize them about criminal and civil procedures in relation to peace and peace making;

(c) Organize seminars to sensitize community leaders and women on the important role women should play in developing a culture of peace in the family and in society;

(d) Young people, and especially girls, should participate in all conferences and fora devoted to peace;

(e) Women to be educated in their civic rights and sensitized about criminal and civil procedures and enact a law to prosecute peace offenders;

(f) Encourage rehabilitation centres to ensure that the knowledge and professions of displaced and refugee people are utilized;

(g) Regional research and training institutes to carry out research on the role of women in the peace process and to identify and analyse policies and action programmes.

9. Mainstreaming of gender-disaggregated data

115. Rationale

Proper implementation and monitoring of the Platform for Action require information, data and continuous research for updating information. Furthermore, women as stake holders need to have knowledge and the statistics with which to assert their rights to mobilize for change and to make informed choices. In addition, the concept of mainstreaming and integration requires development of indicators and guidelines to guide policy makers, planners and the actors in the socio-economic, cultural and political sectors.

116. Objectives

(a) To effect research as a necessary component for the development of knowledge towards the understanding of gender issues in Africa;

(b) To develop data and tools that can evaluate and quantify work, including women's work in agriculture, in the home and in the community and marketed and non-marketed production;

(c) To mainstream the use and application of gender and age disaggregated data by policy makers, planners and programme implementers in all sectors;

(d) To undertake time budget studies, develop and use other methodologies to produce qualitative and quantitative data to value women's non-market and unpaid work with particular emphasis on participatory action research;

(e) To establish in all member States reliable and updated databases on women;

(f) To achieve visibility of women at all levels and in all types of databases;

(g) To ensure that information is disseminated to reach all women.

117. Proposed actions

(a) Facilitate national central bureaux of statistics to incorporate gender statistics units in their structures and to ensure that member States establish information and resource centre for women;

(b) Improve the collection and dissemination of gender and age disaggregated information on target groups and target areas in order to facilitate the design of focused programmes and activities consistent with the identified needs;

(c) Ensure and facilitate the mainstreaming and application of gender and age-disaggregated data by development agents and member States and to establish networks for the exchange of gender disaggregated information;

(d) Strengthen the data gathering capability of women machineries and sectoral gender focal points;

(e) Improve skills for the collection of gender statistics and issue guidelines and indicators for data and information development for and about women;

(f) Enhance the capacity and strengthen the advisory, coordinating, operational and research roles of the African Centre for Women;

(g) Empower women through the research process by developing research capacity that will be participatory, accessible and informative.

Women, information, communication and arts

118. Rationale

The media's role as a powerful tool of national development cannot be underestimated. Although information is one of the strongest tools for empowerment of women, access to the media and to other sources of information is limited. Most media is targeted at urban areas, while the majority of women live in the rural areas. In addition, stereotyped portrayal of women as objects rather than people still continues, which impede the contribution and participation of women to the development process.

Most of the available information do not correspond to the real practical needs of the majority of women especially in the rural areas. Materials and demonstration written for and about women as well as those written by women remain inadequate, information centres are insufficient or lacking.

Women have limited or no access to information about their legal and human rights, opportunities for development and/or other tools for their empowerment.

Positions of power of formal authority are the main common denominators among those who have the greatest access to or get to speak through the different channels of the media.

Since women are not in positions of power in society and have limited formal authority, they are largely invisible in the media.

The challenge now is to gather more information and to devise strategies to begin to shift the media and society in a direction that is more developmental, gender equitable and positive.

119. Objectives

(a) To increase women's access to and use of the media and information;

(b) To increase women's participation in the management of the media so as to facilitate the use of media to provide women's positive contribution to society.

120. Proposed actions

(a) Governments to adopt gender-awareness programmes at all media training institutions and media organizations targeted at both men and women media practitioners;

(b) Affirmative action policies in favour of women to be introduced at all media organizations;

(c) Provide funds for training of women in journalism, film and video making and in specialized areas, e.g., science, technology, environment, economics, politics and related subjects;

(d) Sensitize media managers and practitioners to increase coverage on women's activities;

(e) Promotion of media literacy programmes;

(f) Introduction of media monitoring units that ensure positive portrayal of women in the media and hold the media accountable when it propagates negative stereotypes of women or exploit women and girls in pornography;

(g) Enhancing the role of the traditional and modern communication media to promote gender equality;

(h) Develop and strengthen alternative forms of media, e.g., story telling. drama, especially in the rural areas;

(i) Introduction of community radio stations as a way of increasing women's access to and use of the media;

(j) Governments to undertake research studies on the impact of the content of media product especially violence on television;

(k) Governments to encourage consumer boycotts on products whose advertisements portray women negatively;

(l) February 25 of every year to be celebrated as a special day for Women and the Media;

(m) Running themes for the International Press Freedom Day (May 3) to also focus on media women, portrayal of women by the media;

(n) African Governments to come up with a new criteria of what news is and this should be incorporated into curriculum of journalism training schools. The current definition weighs heavily on "bad news is good news";

(o) Research and documentation on gender and media issues as well as research related to gender, media and culture to be undertaken;

(p) Review of media policies to be done to ensure that these are gender-responsive and committed to the goal of democracy and freedom of expression for all participants in society.

The girl-child

121. Rationale

The girl-child of today is the woman of tomorrow. In order that she may grow up with the health, confidence and education necessary for her to take her place with dignity and equal to man in society, special attention needs to be focused on her.

The girl-child with disabilities needs the special help of Governments to ensure that she has access to all the special devices needed, even when her family is poor.

122. Objectives

(a) To eliminate discrimination of girls in the areas of education and training, health and nutrition;

(b) To advocate for elimination of negative cultural attitudes and practices against women and girls;

(c) To enhance the capacities and esteem of girls especially those with special needs;

(d) To sensitize the girl-child about social, economic and political issues and problems.

123. Proposed actions

(a) Undertake research on the situation of girls. Information and data should be disaggregated by gender and age to provide a basis for action;

(b) Create awareness on the disadvantaged situation of girls among policy makers, implementors and communities;

(c) Review policies and legislation to ensure the promotion of girls in matters pertaining to education, health and early marriage;

(d) Support NGOs and community-based organizations in their efforts to promote changes in practices and attitudes towards women and girls;

(e) Provide education and skill training after primary education to increase girls' opportunities for employment. The education of the girl-child with disabilities should be free and compulsory to ensure that her needs are met;

(f) Support sex education beginning in primary school;

(g) Review school curriculum and text books to include gender equality;

(h) Promote public information for equal treatment of women and girls regarding nutrition, health care, education and participation in decision-making;

(i) Mobilize men and boys to promote girls' and women's status and to work towards equal partnership between girls and boys and women and men;

(j) Provide opportunities for pupils who become pregnant while at school to enable them to continue with their education. 2/

B. Resource implications and mobilization

124. Implementation of the African Platform for Action will require the mobilization of all available human, physical and financial resources internationally, regionally and nationally. Investment in people (men, women and youth) and, inter alia, in infrastructure, education, health, employment, food production and food security, including proper functioning of institutions, are prerequisites for the success of the implementation process. Such mobilization will have to be based on short-, medium- and long-term objectives and perspectives. In addition, commitments from the central actors should be reflected in specific and substantial allocations proportionate to their operating budgets. The main rationale for assistance to African countries to implement the Platform for Action should be based on ethics of mutual benefit, collective responsibility and sustainable development. Africa and its partners in development must recognize the responsibilities in adopting criteria for the allocation of resources and the need and new strategies towards a durable solution to the crippling external debt should be applied in a timely and flexible manner through measures such as debt cancellation and conversion, debt for social development swaps especially for women programmes. Therefore all African Governments should allocate more resources for the financing of women's programmes. Appropriate emphasis should be placed on bilateral and multilateral assistance for empowering women for poverty alleviation and the economic empowerment through job creation programmes; credit schemes for the poor, for women and self-employed; rural employment generation programmes, non-farm employment in the women-dominated rural sector; programmes for education; nutrition and health.

125. Alongside these measures, effective planning, better management, particularly through transparency in the allocation of resources must be encouraged. African Governments should endeavour to explain economic reform and adjustment measures to their citizens, focusing on how these measures affect the lives of people. Governments must also introduce and publicize measures aimed at encouraging accountability within their own operations as well as in the operations of NGOs. In turn, women's organizations and NGOs can also exert pressure on Governments to avoid the mismanagement of resources in order to free these resources for more pressing and priority national needs.

126. Resources will be mobilized from the following sources:

(a) Governmental and intergovernmental: in the national budgets, adequate provision should be made to fund the proposed actions for implementation on a sustainable basis;

(b) Women's organizations, national and international NGOs: to show their commitment towards the success of the follow-up to the Platform for Action, individual women, women's organizations and men should also make provision for funding the proposed actions;

(c) Development partners: for facilitating women political action groups' participation in national elections;

(i) Bilateral partners: There is growing consensus among countries in the African region that at least 20 per cent of ODA should be committed to human development programmes, as compared with the average of 17 per cent. Africa's development partners should commit themselves to meeting this target and to match the increased allocations that African countries will make to human and social development fields. Africa's social development, particularly through the economic empowerment of women, will further require the availability of new and additional resources. This Platform reaffirms the setting of 0.7 per cent of the gross national product (GNP) of industrialized countries as the internationally agreed target for official development assistance (ODA). This target should be implemented and enhanced through new and additional resources within specific time frames. In addition, the 20-20 concept, which calls to donor countries and agencies to allocate a minimum of 20 per cent of their development assistance, and developing countries to also allocate the same percentage of their budget to social sector expenditure, is supported, with a special focus on women;

(ii) Multilateral financial institutions: Multilateral partners should establish special windows for financing the implementation of the Platform for Action. In particular, such windows should offer easy access to women entrepreneurs;

(iii) The United Nations system should incorporate a strong funding component in their programme of work and regular budgets in support of the implementation of the activities of the Platform for Action. It is proposed that such budgetary allocations should be between 20 and 25 per cent.

(iv) As a matter of priority, the proceeds of debt by-back, equity conversion or debt progressiveness should be channelled by African countries and their development partners into women's programmes.

127. The proposed financial arrangements should address the stated objectives and the proposed actions in the Platform for Action. At the national level, African Governments should apply gender-sensitive planning and evaluation to all public spending including identification of the amounts directed to benefit women, and their impact. At the international, regional and subregional levels, emphasis should be on evaluating and coordinating the programmes undertaken by United Nations agencies and regional and subregional intergovernmental organizations.

C. Institutional arrangements for the implementation of the African Platform for Action

128. The importance of core structures for the effective implementation of the strategies and plans of action for the advancement of women was recognized at the onset of the Decade for Women. Experiences since then have confirmed not only the need for such structures, but also the basic requirements that can make them more effective, especially in view of the need to bring women's concerns

into the mainstream of development. These requirements include strong political will, locating such structures at the highest level of decision-making and providing them high technical capabilities and adequate resources. Institutional arrangements for implementation and monitoring of the African Platform for Action have to be clearly identified, bearing in mind that gender issues and concerns cut across all areas of development and therefore involve multiple institutions and actors at all levels. However, a core structure with a direct mandate of coordinating, monitoring and evaluating implementation of, and accountability to, the Platform for Action is required at international, regional and national levels. A review of the current institutional arrangements in support of programmes for the advancement of women is a useful starting point. The core structure for the implementation of the African Platform for Action should have the mandate for advocacy and for ensuring the mainstreaming of gender concerns in all sectors, programmes and at all levels; monitoring, evaluation and accountability required at all levels.

(a) National machineries for the advancement of women

129. The need to monitor the empowerment of women in all areas of life through the establishment of responsible institutions has been recognized and called for by African Governments. Several global and regional conferences have outlined the mandates and purposes and activities of such institutions and the strategies to accelerate the advancement of women. National machineries are defined as institutions or formal entities recognized by Governments and entrusted with particular responsibility for the advancement of women and the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women in monitoring the ramifications of gender relations in a given society, and acting as advocates on behalf of women. Africa also has a rich history of grass-roots women's organizations.

130. Several reports and studies indicate that in mid-1980s, Africa had over 50 different types of institutions. The growth of such machineries has continued and by the end of the 1980s, there were about 66 machineries. To date, there are approximately 650 to 800 NGOs dealing with gender issues and the advancement of women. Most of these are independent grass-roots groups dealing with women's issues in different capacities. A number of them are attached to the ruling political parties and there are a few cases where NGOs and mixed governmental and non-governmental organizations are recognized as national machineries. These institutions are engaged in activities ranging from welfare concerns of women to improving women's access to resources. A number of them, especially those tied to political parties, have also been engaged in advocacy and awareness-creation on women's concerns. National machineries in Africa have covered a lot of ground towards the implementation of the Nairobi and Arusha Strategies.

131. This Platform proposes that institutional arrangements for implementation, monitoring and evaluation of its objectives and actions should be based on three major activities, namely:

(a) Strengthening, mainstreaming and harmonizing the existing institutions at all levels, through increased human and financial resources; and creating new institutional arrangements, where necessary;

(b) Expanding the mandates and operations of existing institutions (e.g., by mainstreaming women's needs and perspectives, defining clear mandates, policies and management approaches and establishing strong gender sensitive development programmes, women's networks and strengthening technical capacities).

(b) Subregional level

132. At the subregional level, several agencies and treaties exist that can be instrumental to the implementation of the Platform for Action. These include, inter alia, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Preferential Trade Area of Eastern and Southern African States (PTA), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), the Central African Customs and Economic Union (UDEAC), the West African Monetary Union (UMOA) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). These agencies, as well as the African Development Bank (ADB), should provide opportunities for empowering and mainstreaming women in the economic area and for eliminating gender biases in their operations.

(c) Regional level

133. Since 1975, United Nations regional commissions have been mandated by General Assembly resolution 3520 (XXX) "to accord special attention to government programmes and projects aimed at the full integration of rural women in development". In the African region, in 1975, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) Conference of Ministers, established the African Training and Research Centre for Women (ATRCW), now the African Centre for Women (ACW). The Africa Regional Coordinating Committee for the Integration of Women in Development (ARCC) is a subsidiary body of the ECA with subregional representation by 15 member States. The OAU, which brings together African Heads of State and Government as well as sectoral ministerial conferences, is well placed to advocate and sensitize all these target groups towards effective implementation of the Platform for Action.

(d) United Nations

134. United Nations system-wide coordination on gender issues at the policy level is largely the responsibility of existing United Nations commissions and committees such as the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Commission on Human Rights, the Population Commission, the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). At the level of programmes for the advancement of women, numerous specific United Nations organizations and agencies are mandated to focus largely on gender issues. Among them are UNIFEM, UINSTRAW, UNFPA, the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (UNDAW). In addition, as already pointed out earlier, since the 1970s all United Nations organizations are required to include a strong gender component in all their programmes and activities.

VI. FOLLOW-UP MECHANISM FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING OF THE AFRICAN PLATFORM FOR ACTION

135. A flexible assessment and monitoring mechanism for the implementation of the African Platform for Action should be put in place. The emphasis should be on strengthening and capacity-building of the existing national mechanisms preferably the National Preparatory Committees that could monitor and implement the Platform for Action. The different mechanisms should establish linkages at the community, national, regional and international levels in order to assess the progress achieved in the implementation of the Platform. At the regional level, coordination, monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the African Platform for Action should be entrusted to ARCC in close collaboration and consultation with existing IGOs such as PTA, SADC, ECOWAS, etc., as well as the Joint OAU/ADB/ECA secretariat, IPU, UPA and relevant United Nations agencies especially UNIFEM, as stipulated in the existing institutional frameworks. The body should meet annually and should present a progress report to the ECA Conference of Ministers, the OAU Council of Ministers and the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government every two years. There should also be a review of the effectiveness of the delivery of donor programmes related to gender and development.

136. To foster the dissemination of information relating to the process and progress of implementation of the Platform for Action, the Secretariat should publish a regional report on African women. To ensure a better monitoring of the African Platform for Action and other actions for the advancement of women, it would be important to institute a prize-award scheme for the countries on the basis of their performance for the advancement of African women.

Notes

1/ Sudan expressed its reservations.

2/ Sudan expressed reservations.